The Dominant Blood
Robert E. McClure

THE
DOMINANT BLOOD

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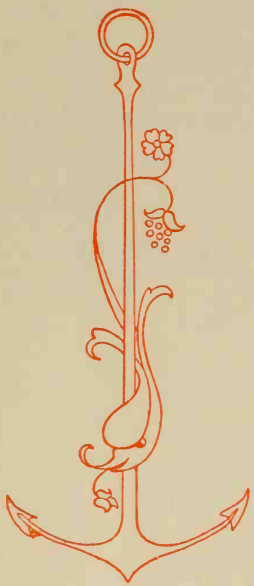
THE DOMINANT BLOOD

BY

ROBERT E. McCLURE



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First Edition

TO THE MEMORY OF

MY BROTHER

SAMUEL GRANT McCLURE, Jr.

1900—1922

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BOOK ONE

PART I

PROLOGUE

1901

THE DOMINANT BLOOD

CHAPTER I

MOLDENHAUER AND EVANS

IN THOSE early days of the new century people spoke proudly, and even reverently, of *The Age.*

That it was an age of miracles, an age of peculiar enlightenment, was universally acknowledged. So many incredibly good things had happened to mankind during the past fifty years, and such excellent things, of course, were going to continue to happen, that everything seemed possible and actually about to transpire. Over the horizon, not so very far away, lay the Millennium. It was an age of faith, of boundless faith in the inexhaustible resources of America, in the innate goodness of humanity and its capacity for rapid and tangible progress, in the sovereign power of the machine to create the most desirable civilization the world had known.

There were Twentieth Century trains, Twentieth Century telegraphs, telephones, steamships; Twentieth Century newspapers, horseless carriages, bicycles; Twentieth Century skyscrapers, refrigerators, heating systems, and plumbing fixtures. It was exciting. Older people were speaking of the privilege of living in the Twentieth Century—though it may be older people had always spoken that way.

In the year 1901 two residents, among others, of the little city of Columbus, Ohio, were even more impressed with the promise of the future than with the undeniably wonderful present.

Like countless other Americans who had reaped the fruits of foresight, imagination, and hard work, they thought of their city as of a chrysalis undergoing a sure and miraculous process of transformation. The older of the two, Frederick Moldenhauer, had seen the place of his adoption grow from a small country town, after the Civil War, to a thriving state capital of 125,000; his son-in-law, Maynard Evans, looked to the day when Columbus should attain metropolitan stature. Three decades of growth had made Frederick Moldenhauer the wealthiest man in town, and he had manifested his civic faith by acquiring, with profits from the principal brewery in central Ohio, the controlling interest in the Columbus street railway system and the largest carriage works in the state. As president of the latter and a director of the former, Maynard Evans had become something more than the husband of old Moldenhauer's only child—a business man who at thirty-eight had earned the unique American title of "Successful."

They were both highly, though somewhat differently, esteemed in the community. Commonly associated in the public mind as in their business enterprises, old Moldenhauer was regarded by business Columbus as a potentate, his son-in-law as a prime minister able but always subordinate. The potentate was entoured by minor splendours, such as the emblazoned eagle trademark of Moldenhauer Beer, the Street Railway System, the Carriage Works, the Ulysses Grant Hotel, and by his conspicuous daughter, Augusta Moldenhauer Evans. But social Columbus, while paying old Moldenhauer due respect, accepted Maynard Evans on his own account, as they had accepted his family when the potentate's forebears were still Bavarian peasants. There were even those who considered the Brewery a slight blot on the scutcheon, offset, it was true, by the respectability of the other quarterings, but still a blot. The answer was that Moldenhauer Beer was the best known "home" beer in the state, and that the still simple and compact social world of a smaller American city, however it might boast

of names and "traditions" going back seventy or eighty years, could hardly ignore such a multi-millionaire personage as Frederick Moldenhauer.

It was on the whole a kindly, tolerant, good-natured town. Its people were hospitable and cordial to strangers, as befitted residents of a state capital whose prestige sprang from politics and the fact of its central dominance over a rich agricultural section; it was primarily a trading and political town, without great manufactures or wealth. In those days we considered it a busy and splendid place; looking back, I suspect it of being all the while as prosaic as any other of its size. But whatever its qualities or defects, they were those of the American middle class of that period; for Columbus was essentially a middle-class town. If it lacked great fortunes and any conspicuous number of pretentious residences, it also lacked slums and the unassimilated foreign element of some of its rivals (though its large Negro quarter gave it a seamy side); and its proportion of well-kept and comfortable middle-class homes was unusually high.

Also it had Broad Street. In the early nineteen hundreds Broad Street could claim distinction, especially in its boulevarded lower section, about a dozen squares in length, near the old State Capitol. Some of these squares had actually changed little since the Civil War. Splendid old elms lined the sidewalks for a mile, elms more ancient than Broad Street's oldest house; smaller trees, maples and chestnuts, screened the placid dirt carriage lanes of the boulevarded section from the long asphalt mid-channel of the avenue. Through the trees, surrounded by fine open lawns, one glimpsed stately late-Victorian houses in brick or stone, the frequent ugliness of which was lost in a sense of spaciousness and the kindly softening of age and well-grown shrubbery. They had an air of being conscious of their solid worth and dignity, and of the dignity of those lives they sheltered and, I think, quite often symbolized.

It is a pity the Maynard Evans's house no longer stands—it

was such a house, and indeed one of the "show places" of that older Broad Street which, too, has vanished. Built about 1890 as old Moldenhauer's wedding present to his daughter, it is still remembered for its fine trees and grounds, its great steep green-tiled roof, its vault-like stone porches with Germano-Byzantine arches, its conservatory, its curving plate-glass bay windows and coloured oriels. Before Augusta Moldenhauer no Columbus bride had ever "started" in a home so large and ugly and magnificent; and Maynard Evans had been considered a very lucky man. But however envious, there were few who dared imply that he had married Augusta out of purely material considerations; and there were many, especially among the female sex, who very frankly voiced the opinion that the bride might have done much worse. Certainly Maynard Evans, in addition to being a potentate's right hand, was one of the most popular of men; admired for his ability, his sagacity, praised for his affability and ready humour, and renowned for his all-around charm. This last was only partially explained by his good looks. A little under six feet, very straight and well set up, he was a strikingly handsome figure up to the time of his death; his splendidly featured face owing much of its appeal to the humorous, appreciative intelligence with which it seemed always infused and to the kindly expression of his twinkling blue eyes.

He was, for a man of business, remarkably sympathetic in the French sense of the word; remarkably sensitive to people and "atmosphere," and artistic in temperament and tastes. The two qualities, I suppose, are complementary and quite commonly associated; no doubt they belong to natures fundamentally emotional rather than intellectual. Surely no man without a richly emotional nature could have exerted Maynard Evans's magnetic fascination on others. Much of his business success he undoubtedly owed to his eloquence and powers of salesmanship, and to the ability—for which he was famous—to arrive at compromises and reconcile opposing factions.

Without it he could scarcely have lived in such apparent tranquillity, for so many years, with a woman whose character was so nearly the antithesis of his own.

Augusta Evans should have been a man. Not that her exterior cast reproach upon her sex—quite the contrary. She was a handsome woman, whose figure was still good on the side of plenitude—large limbed, large hips and torso, a splendid bust. Although somewhat disappointing at close range, owing to a certain hardness of expression, her brusque, direct manner was not unattractive; while her really charming smile could light up the small metallic gray eyes and soften the impression of an absolute rigidity of mind. But what a man she would have made in force and character! As it was she was formidable; and indeed such qualities as her self-confidence, iron will, and imperviousness are always formidable, especially when joined with a mind as shrewd and a physique as vigorous and as inexhaustibly productive of determination as hers.

Above all, she was her father's daughter. Strange, then, that when old Moldenhauer and Maynard Evans made, in common parlance, a good team, Augusta and the latter should have paired so ill. But a deficient sense of humour is of greater consequence in a wife than in a father-in-law—a truth which Maynard Evans had come, in the year 1901, to hold self-evident.

It befell that on a certain February afternoon of that year, Augusta sat at her writing desk by a large upstairs bay window, looking out on a darkening world and a Broad Street white with snow.

It was a little after four o'clock and she was momentarily expecting the arrival of two people—her eight-year-old son Stuart, whom she had sent the coachman to fetch from private school an hour before; and Mrs. Enid Wilkinson, an intimate friend who had promised to drop in for tea. Seeing no sign of either down the white vista of the street she was impatient,

and her earlier bad humour was returning. It was annoying that Stuart should be so late. Enid, of course, didn't matter, except that she should be out of the way by the time old Moldenhauer stopped on his way from business. Her anticipation of an interview with her father which was certain to be difficult —an interview she had herself solicited—crowded from her mind the minor annoyance of her son and brought a heavy frown to her handsome face.

She suddenly glimpsed her brougham entering the drive, and laying aside her letter she hurried down to the porte-cochère door just as the gas lamps were being lighted through the house.

To her surprise, the coachman stood alone at the door.

"He wouldn't come, ma'am. He was with a lot of boys snowballin' each other all over that big lot next the school. I started after him, ma'am, but one of 'em shied a snowball at the carriage. Yes, ma'am, at the *carriage.* So I let him go."

Augusta could not believe the evidence of her ears. "He *refused* to come with you?"

"Yes, ma'am. I didn't get no chance at him."

"I never heard of such a thing. You should have gotten someone to hold the horses, William, and made him come. I've a good mind to send Gruener back with you."

"They was having some kind of a game, ma'am, and they all ran up Bryden Road. I waited, but they didn't come back."

"Very well. I suppose he'll get home all right. But don't unharness. You'll have to go out again if he isn't here by five."

Her brusque, peremptory manner toward the servant gave no indication of her surge of unreasonable anger at the episode. She would have to discipline that child, teach him better than to refuse to come when she sent after him.

Enid Wilkinson was presently announced, and brightening somewhat at the prospect of unburdening her mind to this sympathetic friend, Augusta ordered tea.

Mrs. Wilkinson was a widow, the mother of two boys of eleven and eight, yet, like Augusta, in the early thirties. She was a

pretty little woman, with large dark eyes set in a fine, full, oval face, wavy brown hair, and a slender, graceful figure. A strange, retiring, rather enigmatic person, she hazarded her opinions timidly and was easily confused; for this reason Augusta liked her, feeling an increase of confident superiority in her presence. The fact that Enid belonged to one of the older families of the town, that her husband had been a dissolute aristocrat who had wasted the larger part of their comfortable fortune, made this feeling the more agreeable. And lastly, they had interests, sympathies, girlhood associations in common, and sons who like themselves were contemporaries.

But Augusta didn't feel sorry for Enid—she would leave that for the sentimentalists who thought that drink and dissipation had enhanced the romantic glamour of the Wilkinson name, and that a woman wasn't better off without such a husband as the late Jeffrey Wilkinson, son of a governor though he was. When he died in 1897 someone had said to Augusta: "Oh, dear, isn't it a pity about poor Jeffrey Wilkinson?"

"Pity he didn't die sooner, you mean," Augusta had replied; and added: "Of course, it's too bad Enid will have to raise her boys alone; but doubtless it's for the best, and if she's sensible she'll marry again."

So far, however, Enid hadn't been sensible to that degree, and her complete indifference to the prospect had made her a disappointing subject for gossip and cost her the interest of many of her friends.

The conversation, after exhausting such subjects as children, clothes, and servants, became desultory with the advent of tea.

"Maynard still away?" Enid asked.

"Yes." She appeared to stiffen slightly. "I expected him back yesterday morning, but he wired saying he was detained."

Enid was sympathetic. "What a shame, my dear. And you didn't get to the Ransom's reception."

"Not without any one to take me. Of course, my not being able to go was nothing to Maynard." She rose and took the

other's cup almost rudely. "He's having too good a time in New York to think of me."

"But, my dear," Enid began slowly, after a pause. "He's there on business, isn't he?"

"So he says."

Then seeing the look of surprise on her friend's face, and feeling she had said too much, Augusta laughed her brusque, unmusical laugh. "That's what they always say, and of course you've got to believe them. But tell me what you've been doing, Enid. I'm out of sorts this afternoon, I guess. What was the reception like?"

"I didn't go."

There was a sound of a door closing in the rear of the house, a stamping of feet in the hall back of the living room, and a moment later a boy's high-pitched voice called impatiently: "Oh, Anna! Anna, can I have your broom, please?"

With a significant look at her caller, Augusta rose and proceeded quickly toward the hall and the voice, leaving the other to her thoughts and the cheerful company of a wood fire burning at the opposite end of the room.

To Enid Wilkinson, who knew something of her friend's taste in houses and dress and furnishings, it was a room expressive of the master of the house rather than of his wife. The dark mahogany panelling extended on all sides halfway to the ceiling, and together with an ornate marble mantel belonged to the earlier period of old Moldenhauer's conception. Recalling the room's original collection of ugly and discordant furniture and bric-à-brac, Enid marvelled at its present harmony and good taste. Maynard—surely no one else—had selected those lamps and vases, the magnificent Bokhara rug. The two paintings, one an early Blake, were of course his, as were the old oil portraits of his father and mother, and the perception which, besides replacing a dozen bad pictures with four excellent ones, had caused the whole scheme to be simplified and harmonized. She wondered curiously if he had also been responsible for the pretty

chintz chair covers and hangings. She would like to ask, though it hardly seemed well-bred to evince so much curiosity. Nor to inquire just what Augusta had meant by that sarcastic reference to her husband having a good time.

Yet her characteristic effort at repression only served to increase that curiosity. She could not escape a disagreeable sense of something sinister lurking behind her friend's remark. . . . She wondered.

She got up impulsively, feeling that such speculations were almost a breach of hospitality—for she possessed an absurd delicacy quite out of keeping with the Twentieth Century—and followed her hostess toward the back hall.

Augusta towered over her son, scolding and directing; a neatly uniformed maid was wielding a whiskbroom in the manner of a groom currying a horse. The boy, a quite ordinary-looking boy, stood on an outspread newspaper already wet from slushy snow, and his thin body, as the brush struck, stiffened with sullen tension. Drops of melted snow, dirty and cold, dripped from his soggy shoes, his stockings, even from his tousled sandy hair. His face, the profile of which was visible to Enid, was wet and streaked with dirt and wore a look of bored resignation.

Augusta's voice: "Now, Stuart, this comes of your disobeying me. When I send William after you you're to come at once, not send him back alone. Do you understand? In the future he's to bring you whether you like it or not. Now as soon as Anna gets through you're to take a bath. Anna, see that he does. A warm bath, temperature about 90, Anna; not too hot. . . . Now, it's no use fussing, Stuart; do you hear me? Now, listen. After your bath I want you to stay in your room, near the fire. And I want you to do your lessons. You can't have your soldiers till you've done every single lesson. Anna, lock up the soldiers and give me the key when you come down."

"Oh, gee whiz! Mother——"

"It's no use fussing. This thing of your getting into snowball

fights has got to stop. Lessons come first, do you understand? You can play with the boys afterward."

"But, gee whiz, Mother! They'll all be gone by the time I get through! And it'd be dark besides. Gosh, can't I have a *little* fun?"

"We won't argue about it, Stuart. On days when you have homework you will do that first; the rest of the time you can play. But because you disobeyed me to-day, you stay in the rest of the week."

She turned and, without seeing Enid, started toward her; but his suppliant "Mother?" caused her to pause.

"Well?"

"When will Dad come home?"

"I don't know."

"But isn't he coming pretty soon, Mother?"

She hesitated and her voice grew gentler: "I suppose so. Now, I wouldn't worry about him any more, dear. . . . Anna, don't forget about the soldiers."

Enid prepared to take leave, and as Augusta did not press her to remain, the two friends moved toward the front door.

They were shaking hands when a large cabriolet, drawn by a pair of handsome bays, rolled up behind the widow's carriage, and without waiting for the latter to move away from the carriage block, pulled up beside the curb. A white-haired elderly man, bundled up to the ears and burly in a great-coat, alighted on to the snow. It was Frederick Moldenhauer.

He met Enid on the walk as the other came out alone, giving her a courteous greeting, and a moment later nodding to his daughter on the porch.

"And how are you to-day, little lady? You must not go away so soon, just as I arrive." He spoke precisely, with a slight accent and a benignant smile; Enid was one of his daughter's friends of whom he distinctly approved.

"But I must, Mr. Moldenhauer! It's quite dark, and I must get back to my boys."

"Ach, those boys! Augusta, don't catch cold standing there! Go in the house and I'll come. You must bring those boys to see me, do you hear? Fine boys, your Godfrey and our little Stuart." He spoke a little tremulously, suddenly appearing a much older man than he who had addressed Augusta a moment before. "Ah, well, well. I will help you to your carriage. Don't forget now about the boys. Good-bye."

He stood for an instant, watching the brougham as it drove off; then, stamping his snowy overshoes on the clean-swept walk, moved slowly toward the house, puffing a little and slightly stooped.

"You came early, Pappa." Augusta had obediently gone inside; her father was one being before whom she could still feel awe. Now she opened the door for him, and, to his surprise, kissed him suddenly on the cheek.

"Well, Augusta. You said you wanted to talk to me." He stood in the living room, rubbing his hands and peering at her over the rims of his thick glasses, his gray, somewhat bloodshot eyes searching her face inquiringly.

"Yes." She took his arm impulsively and conducted him to a chair by the fire; but he remained standing. The little token of affection betrayed her nervousness; for Augusta had never been a demonstrative girl, and since her marriage had rarely indulged in outward tenderness toward her only remaining parent.

"What I wanted to see you about can wait till after dinner. Have you had a hard day, Pappa?"

He seemed not to have heard the question. "Where's the boy?"

She told him briefly of her son's tardy homecoming and her subsequent discipline.

"Ach, that will not do, Augusta. The boy should have been whipped for disobeying. I'll just run up and see him before dinner."

Old Frederick Moldenhauer was sixty-five, and had the

majestic and solemn mien (without his glasses) of a St. Bernard dog grown very old. He had a great shock of bristly white hair, and that type of bushy, Bismarckian moustache which might be conceived as the *raison d'être* of the old-time moustache cup. He was big-jowled, with heavy pouches under his eyes; these and the florid, puffy face bore witness to his long years of grinding industry with little exercise and much food and beer.

He was not of the famous generation of '48, though he idolized Carl Schurz; he had come as an orphan to America on the eve of the Civil War. During the terrible summer of 1862 he had joined a Pennsylvania regiment, not only out of a growing patriotism, but also because he shrewdly realized, with his incomparable faculty for looking ahead, that the future lay with the men who fought, won, and survived the war. Within six months he had learned the ropes, bettered his English, and obtained a transfer to the Quartermaster Corps, where his instinct for method and organization won him a comfortable berth and a commission. The War over he had drifted to Columbus, scraped together a little capital, and started a brewery. Ten years of unceasing application made him wealthy; meanwhile, he had further secured his place in the community by taking an "American" bride, a Grace Stuart, who had taught in the high school. She had been a true helpmate to him, a sagacious counsellor and a refining influence; with her at his side his progress had been continuous. Of three children born to them, only Augusta had survived infancy.

The death of his wife, a few years after his daughter's marriage, had been a loss from which he had never fully recovered. Since then he had lived alone in a large house on the other side of town, keeping an outward show of solitary state, but in reality living very simply; and except for long vacations spent in his "summer palace" in Germany, working practically as hard as ever.

He opened the door of his grandson's room quietly, and pausing on the threshold, contemplated the small figure sitting

by the fire, his head bowed over a book. The boy's back was partly turned, and old Moldenhauer could see only a side of the face, flushed from the grate's heat and earnestly absorbed. A fine-looking boy, the grandfather thought; and the sight of him, studying diligently, touched the old man strangely, so that for a moment he quite forgot those admonishments he had prepared on the way up. . . .

"Well, my boy——" A husky clearing of the throat.

The figure in the chair started, jumped up, and very deftly hid a copy of Henty's "The Lion of St. Mark" behind his back.

"Why, hello, Grandpa!"

Old Moldenhauer attributed the boy's confusion to the effect of his entrance upon a scholar's concentration, and to the scholar's consciousness of sin; both of which surmises were in part correct.

"Your mother tells me you were not a good boy this afternoon."

Before those searching old eyes Stuart coloured, faltered miserably.

"No, sir."

"You disobeyed her?"

"Why, I—no, sir. I just told William—yes, sir, I disobeyed."

"Hem." A cough—a pause. "I am sorry to hear that, Stuart. Your mother has already punished you. Well—hem—how are you getting along with your studies?"

"All right, Grandpa."

"That is good." He patted his grandson's shoulder, smiled for the first time. "You must be a good boy. Now—hem—here is something for you if you don't disobey your mother any more."

A silver dollar, new and shiny, nestled in Stuart's moist palm as the old man left the room.

CHAPTER II

THE BALANCE OF POWER

SEATED on opposite sides of the big dining-room table, Augusta and her father plainly resembled each other. She had his expression about the eyes—indeed, one might almost fancy her in thirty years as having his eyes, his trick of peering over his glasses; and her mouth was a feminine edition of his.

The old man ate heartily and listened with a somewhat preoccupied air as his daughter related the minor happenings of her day. As she did most of the talking, he was the first to finish the dessert.

"Now, Augusta, what did you want to see me about?"

She hesitated for an instant, studying her spoon; then after a glance which told her of the butler's departure, quickly came to the point.

"About Maynard, Pappa."

After a pause: "Well?"

"He's been gone over a week now, when he said it would be three days."

The old man got up from his chair without comment and walked over to the sideboard, absently peering at the silver tea service. There was a slight scowl on his face; this was not the first time Augusta had thrown out cryptic insinuations about her husband. A year before she had vaguely intimated that Maynard was neglecting her, and for some time thereafter the old man had kept his eyes and ears open. The son-in-law, it was true, had been out of town a great deal; but that was "business": his responsibilities and interests were considerable; and Frederick Moldenhauer had little patience with wives who

hindered their husbands' business activities. He lighted a cigar, puffed a little, and turned to Augusta:

"If you've finished let us go in the other room."

He preceded her into the library. The scowl had left his face and he was gentler as he asked:

"Augusta, why do you speak this way about your husband's being away?"

"Why? Because he said he was going East on business, and he finished his business three days ago. Because he promised to get back to take me to the Ransom reception and instead is having a lovely time going to plays and operas and taking other women around. Because—just listen to this . . ."

The old man had made an impatient gesture; now Augusta fumbled hurriedly in her shirtwaist and brought forth a letter.

"Just listen. This was written Tuesday night. 'I finished up with the Sherwin people to-day, and on excellent terms.'—He'll doubtless have plenty to say about that to you.—'Also closed up with Dun and Preston, so I really feel very good about the results of the trip. However, I want to go over matters to-morrow with our representatives here, and can't tell just how long it will take. Will wire you'—He wired yesterday saying he was detained, that was all—'Will wire you!'—Now here it is: 'Whom do you think I saw this afternoon at the Knoedler Gallery? Dora Hughes herself, looking very smart in Paris clothes and about to buy a very bad canvas. She asked after you first thing.'—Yes, and I suppose he told her his wife isn't taken to New York when he goes on *business!* As if he couldn't have taken me just as well as not!—'I found she wasn't doing anything this evening and dared her to take dinner with an old married man. She accepted on the condition that I write you about it.'—Pah!—'So we did Sherry's and Ellen Terry in "The Silver Slipper." A charming play—but I'll tell you when I see you.'"

"Is that all?" old Moldenhauer asked gruffly, after a pause.

"Oh, there's a lot more. 'Dora'—Oh, I can't stand that

woman!—'Dora's sister and brother-in-law, the Gilmers, have asked me to hear "Carmen" to-morrow night, but if I can finish up with Robey I won't stay, much as I'd like to hear Eames sing.'—That's about all, except he wants to get a new picture, a Winslow Homer, but the price is out of sight. No doubt he'll buy it."

"Well? What is so criminal in that?"

"That's not the point, Pappa. Oh! don't you *see?*" She crumpled up the letter and tossed it into the fire.

The old man puffed on his cigar for a little in silence, then rose and slowly paced the room. Augusta stared moodily at the fire.

"If this were the first time this sort of thing had happened," she began, "I wouldn't mind. But it's just another proof of what I've known for a long time."

"What have you known for a long time?"

"That he doesn't care *that* much"—she snapped her fingers—"about me so long as I'm out of his way and he can have a good time."

"A *good time*, is it?" Old Moldenhauer's voice was suddenly sharp; he stopped before her. "But he stays up late to write you a letter, don't he? He got the business, didn't he? What are you *talking* about, Augusta!"

She brought forth a tiny lace handkerchief. "He wrote me because that woman told him to."

He glared at her. "I don't see what has gone and got through your head, Augusta. Why, Maynard don't have to be a criminal to go to New York, does he? It isn't criminal to go to the theatre, is it? *Gott in Himmel!* What are you always after Maynard for about first one thing and another? He's a good enough husband as far as I can see. He hasn't much order or system about him, and he cares about a lot of things I don't know anything about, but he gets his work done. Isn't he good to you? Ain't he good to the boy? I don't see what is the matter with you, Augusta!"

The daughter knew the old man too well to interrupt or reply

to this outburst. It was characteristic of him to take the opposite side, and when he "got his dutch up" it was impossible to argue with him. Augusta resorted to the time-honoured softening process her mother had used before her—she applied a handkerchief to her eyes and said nothing.

Old Moldenhauer saw her from the corner of his eye; he stammered, choked on his cigar, and tried in vain to regain a certain vehemence. "Now—now—now—now, Augusta. There isn't nothing to cry about. . . . Now, now, *please*. I didn't mean to scold you, Augusta, I didn't mean it. . . . I just don't like to see you making yourself unhappy."

There was a muffled sound from the chair as Augusta tried to achieve a sob. "Then you won't speak to him, Pappa?"

"Speak to him? *Du lieber Gott!* Forget it. . . . Now, now. . . . I wish you would go to the piano and play for me, Augusta. Come, daughter. . . Liebchen . . ."

Augusta's musical education had not been neglected. Also she had learned when to admit defeat. She wiped her eyes, which were quite dry, and walked to the grand piano in the next room. Her father sank heavily into a chair by the fire and composed himself to listen.

She was just finishing a melody by Schubert when old Moldenhauer's attention was distracted by the sound of the front door closing and a step outside the room. He glanced up and saw his son-in-law slipping out of his overcoat, framed in the curtains of the doorway.

"Hello, Father.' Maynard Evans smiled mischievously at the old man. "Surprised you, didn't I?" He threw the coat aside and, striding across the room, shook his relative's hand warmly. Tall, straight, and with that winning smile, Maynard loved dramatic entrances and was at his best and most hypnotic when making them. Old Moldenhauer, bereft of speech, could only stare over his glasses.

The music had ceased. "Augusta at the piano?" Maynard asked.

"But—when did you get in?" Old Moldenhauer managed to gasp.

"Seven-thirty from Cleveland. I got there this morning and saw Chandler about the hotel matter." He turned toward his wife, who was advancing with an expression of incredulity on her face. "Hello. It's good to be back again. How are you, dear?" He bent forward and kissed her on the cheek. "How's Stuart?"

"All right." She surveyed him coldly. "Why didn't you let me know?"

"Ha! Where then would have been my fine surprise?" He laughed infectiously. "But the principal reason was I didn't know myself. Robey, you see, took more time than I expected." He had the supreme gift, with a word, of making everything quite logical, obvious, and all right. "Father, how's everything? It's good to be back! I've got a lot to tell you. But here I'm interrupting a concert; Augusta, do keep on playing; and you, Father, sit down. Here, smoke one of these—you'll like them. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll just run up with my bag and wash, *and*——" He smiled mysteriously, old Moldenhauer smiled in sympathy, Augusta smiled in spite of herself.

Not until he was on the stairs did Augusta throw off the spell; she called: "Maynard! Don't wake Stuart, whatever you do."

They heard his gay, ringing laugh.

Augusta moved toward the hall. "If he wakes that child——"

Old Moldenhauer stopped her with a look; there was no gainsaying that shake of his head. "Leave him be, daughter," he said gently. "Now let me hear something from Wagner for a change. Music's much better than quarrelling when your husband's just got home. 'Siegfried's Tod,' Augusta—come."

Upstairs, Maynard was already delving in his suitcase, chuckling and whispering to himself. Drawing out a large cardboard box, he unwrapped it hurriedly and with a smile gazed at its contents: several dozen long coloured strips of soldiers; a troop of gorgeous red-jacketed hussars, Prussian infantrymen in

spiked helmets, Napoleonic cuirassiers in shining breastplates and plumed helmets, charging in frenzied gallop with sabres raised. Then, carrying the box, he walked toward his son's room.

He opened the door cautiously and thrust his head into the darkened chamber. "Stuart," he whispered. And in a low voice: "Stuart, are you awake?"

There was no sound. He tiptoed to the bed and gazed down at the face on the pillow, so peaceful and childish, so curiously recalling, dimly, other faces he had loved—just a touch, a ghostly resemblance here and there . . . his father, his wife; boyhood pictures of himself. His boy—and yet those others were in him, too. But *his*. He wanted to stoop and plant a kiss on the forehead, caress the disordered heap of hair that had grown too long. But it would never do to break that deep dreamless sleep. How tired he must have been. . . .

He tiptoed out again, very softly, and in the hall the music wafted up to him like a song set to the music of his own heart.

CHAPTER III

ROMANCE

I

IT WAS a Saturday morning. A small boy, with the serious light of purpose on his freckled face, peered through the glass panel in the pantry door and carefully surveyed the immediate domain of Sarah, *chef de cuisine* to the Maynard Evanses. The big kitchen appearing empty, Stuart boldly pushed open the swinging door and directed a hoarse whisper over his shoulder:

"Come on quick! The coast's clear. You get the matches off the stove."

The wary rear guard thus addressed tiptoed forward. It was young Henry Dupree, commander-in-chief of the Napoleonic forces in the epic conflict raging in the playroom upstairs.

There was a light patter of feet across the wide kitchen floor; Stuart gained the enclosed back porch where the cookie jar was usually hidden on the top shelf; while General Dupree deployed quickly toward the range, and seizing a nearly full box of matches, proceeded to empty the contents into his coat pocket.

But at this very moment it happened that Sarah's loquacious swain, telephoning from the plumbing shop downtown, was called away by an importunate patron; and big Sarah, an Irish lovelight in her eyes, swung into the kitchen.

"Git out of thim matches, ye young divvle, you!"

The apparition that arose on Henry Dupree's right flank was truly terrifying; so was the voice; and the General should not be too severely blamed if he appeared to lose a little of his *sang-froid*. The match box fell to the floor, its few remaining

sticks scattering in an almost perfect arc, while the eight-year-old strategist ran for the pantry.

"Look out, Stu!"

The warning was premature and unfortunate, for Sarah, pursuing the plundered matches, had not yet looked toward the porch door. She now wheeled about and perceived Stuart in the act of stuffing a third handful of cookies inside his sweater. "Oh! The divvils! It's twice they've taken my matches this morning and now it's the new cookies. Git out o' that!" And Sarah's big slippered feet shot toward the porch.

But the leader of the raid had secured his line of retreat and was down the porch stairs and out of sight by the time the frenzied Sarah reached the cookie jar. A few moments later the front door was softly opened, and the purveyor of rations was admitted by the Commander-in-Chief of the Napoleonic forces.

"Get the ammunition, General Dupree?"

"Yeah—almost the whole box. How many cookies did you get?"

"Aw, gee whiz! That's no way to say it. Can't you be more military than that? I told you the word."

Henry appeared puzzled, then brightened:

"Did you get the quazzishun?"

"The requisition was carried out," Stuart answered severely, and brought forth a handful of cookies from his sweater.

Conversation was at an end. The two boys munched their cookies and stealthily ascended the stairs. Arrived in the upper hall a sibilant "Psst!" from Stuart sent them to a crouching position, believed to be typical of the best Indian practice, against the panelled wall.

"Your turn to reconnoitre, Hen—I mean General."

Henry Dupree crept forward, his shoes squeaking and his breath coming in audible grunts, and peered into a door leading to a bedroom.

"Enemy in sight on our right," he whispered.

"You must tell more about the enemy than that."

"Well, it's only the old girl making up the bed," replied Henry, rather petulantly. With injured dignity, Stuart stood up and walked boldly into the playroom.

A truly extraordinary scene was presented by the big, bare-walled, high-ceilinged room. On the carpeted floor several hundred miniature figures were grouped in closely serried ranks, soldiers of many periods and nationalities, infantry, artillery, and cavalry. A large number appeared to be casualties with broken pasteboard supports, or match holes through heads or bodies; while strewn against the baseboards were innumerable burnt matches, the flotsam and jetsam of war, the used-up ammunition which General Dupree had just replenished at such imminent risk.

Stepping gingerly, the two boys cleared the massed ranks near the door and reached a comparatively open space in the centre of the room. Even this, however, was not unobstructed; and it required all the agility that both could muster to stoop, collect the two air rifles at their feet, and proceed by further meticulous footwork to the large windows at the far end of the room. In each embrasure chairs had been placed. Arrived at these points of vantage, the two strategists fell upon their cookies and silently surveyed the confused battlefield at their feet.

It is certain that neither Cyrus the Great, nor Hannibal, nor Wallenstein, nor Marshal Foch, nor even the Man of Destiny himself ever displayed greater enterprise in uniting and commanding oddly diverse military units than Stuart and General Dupree. As chief owner of the *matériel*, Stuart had exercised the prerogative of first choice; his army was composed of British and Prussians, closely allied with Union Infantry, Roughriders, and American Indians. On the other side of the room the General had grouped what both boys were pleased to call "The Napoleon Army": it included a nucleus of Ney's Old Guard, Confederates, Arab horsemen, and a scattering of French Zouaves. (Although Stuart favoured the name, he considered the Zouave uniform too exotic to be in good taste.)

The General was the first to break their silence. He stood up, stretched languidly, and requested:

"Hey—how about another cookie?"

Apparently the commissary was in too good humour to heed this flagrant breech of etiquette; reaching in his sweater, he tossed a sugared disk across the room.

"Say, we aren't ever goin' to finish to-day," he commented, casting an appraising eye over his own army and the considerably larger force—counting those still erect—of the General.

"Shucks! We don't ever get finished unless you win, and then we aren't really finished . . . that is," Henry added, between bites, "if you mean putting them all hoor de combats."

Stuart was impressed with the phrase, but otherwise in opposition.

"Course you don't put them all hoor de combats. Whoever heard of such a thing? Why, even Napoleon, I guess, never put a whole army hoor de combats. There's always some left that get routed. Like the battle of Santiago, for instance. I guess the old Spaniards weren't all killed, 'cause there were a few that ran away and never did get caught until the war was over, my Uncle Arthur told me."

The prestige of Uncle Arthur's testimony had more than once decided such a technical discussion as the present; but the General had a sudden inspiration.

"How about Custer?" he queried. "You told me the Indians killed every last one of Custer's army when they made their last stand."

"Aw, gee whiz! Don't you know anything a-tall? That was Indian warfare. Why, shucks! There's all the difference in the world."

"I don't see why."

"Well, if you don't see *that*—you never will see a thing, that's all. The old Indians never fight fair. They—they annilate their foe."

"What's that?" asked the incredulous General Dupree.

"It's annilation, I tell you."

"Oh!" answered the heckler; then after a meditative pause, "Say, have you any more cookies, Stu?"

The charm of this newly invented pastime lay in its combination of varied attractions. There was the fascination of "collecting," of shopping trips, and the search for novelties; there followed the not unpleasant task of cutting the figures from their strips and adding pasteboard supports; then the subsequent pleasure of commanding and arranging armies of a size hitherto undreamed-of, joined to the crowning seduction of marksmanship, with something really at stake—the introduction of the competitive spirit. Like all great achievements of the human intellect, this represented a gradual evolution, and Maynard had been permitted to contribute an occasional idea, such as the substitution of burnt matches for the prohibited B-B shot. But the boy had worked out most of it himself, and even Augusta had rejoiced at the continuity of his interest.

This morning, however, the war game seemed unusually subject to interruption. A large supply of ammunition still remained, and Stuart's arm had not yet tired of its labours with the air rifle, when an ominous sound began to make itself heard above the din of battle:

"Stu—art! Oh, Stu—art!"

The commander of the Allied Forces lowered his rifle and exclaimed moodily:

"Aw, gee whiz!"

The voice came nearer, sounded outside the door.

"Stuart! Why don't you answer me? Open the door at once!"

Secrecy was often desirable in these as in other manœuvres; hence the locked door of the playroom.

Stuart stepped from clearing to clearing toward the door.

"Gosh! It's your mother," announced the General.

"Well, I know it, don't I?"

The door was opened.

"Stuart! Why in the world didn't you answer me? Oh, good morning, Henry. I didn't know you were playing."

"I just heard you this minute, Mother."

"Why, Mrs. Wilkinson's downstairs with little Godfrey Wilkinson, and they'd like to see you," explained Augusta graciously.

"Aw, gee whiz! Not little Gobie? What do they want?"

"Stuart, I won't have you speak that way of Godfrey. I simply won't have it, do you hear? Now, I want you to come downstairs with me at once. I'm sure Henry will excuse you for a little while, won't you, Henry?"

"Yes'm," replied the awe-struck General.

In the hall outside, Augusta led her recovered son toward the bathroom with the comment that people didn't like to clasp hands as soiled as his, and in the ensuing conversation it came out that Stuart was about to be invited to a party.

"What kind of a party?" he inquired suspiciously.

"Shh! Not so loud. You will find out when you go downstairs."

"Well, if it's any old sissy party of Gobie's——"

"Now, that's enough! You come along with me and behave like a little gentleman." The pressure on Stuart's arm was formidable, and he knew the futility of opposing his mother, whose hard directness sometimes antagonized, and always rather terrified him.

Together they descended the stairs. In the boy's hostility to Godfrey Wilkinson, better known to his own generation as "Gobie," there was something inexplicable and troubling to his parents. Gobie apparently had nothing against Stuart; and even the latter admitted he was not a "sissy." Indeed, Gobie had nothing against any one. He was a mild-mannered, docile child, resembling his mother in features and luxuriant, if somewhat tousled, dark hair. Shy, and entirely lacking in aggressiveness, his courtesy invariably won adult favour; yet there was no trace of priggishness or affectation about Gobie; he had

merely practised a rigorous self-effacement in the shadow of his more determined elder brother. He was, quite simply, a "good boy," and as such aroused in Stuart an unconscious and unreasonable distrust.

The greeting between the two boys was restrained, though Gobie was more at ease than his host.

"Mother and I wondered if you'd go to the matinée with us this afternoon," he pronounced politely.

"I guess so," began Stuart, and then, sensing his mother's displeasure, added faintly: "It'd be fine."

"It's a war play, Stuart," volunteered Enid Wilkinson in an effort to warm the atmosphere; "'The Blue and the Gray,' and we're going to have a box party. We'll come for you at a quarter of two."

"All right," replied Stuart faintly, and Augusta interposed: "Stuart will love it, I know, and so shall I. It was sweet of you to ask us, Godfrey. Well, Stuart, have you lost your tongue? Can't you say thank you?"

"Thank you," said Stuart precisely. A parrot could have done better. As the bearers of the invitation moved toward the door, he prematurely returned to the stairs, an increased awkwardness in his manner: "Well, good-bye. I got a friend waiting upstairs. Thanks, Gobie"; and before his outraged mother could catch his eye, he had displayed a sweatered back hastily turning the corner above the landing.

Great generals have always had to contend with the interference of civilian governments. As General Dupree left the Evans residence a short time later, he reflected on the injustice of such interference. His recent host, deprived of his air rifle and smarting under an ignominious reduction in rank, reflected that the day had begun badly and threatened to grow worse.

II

Surprised when he learned the identity of the voice on the telephone, and still more surprised at the invitation, Maynard

Evans had begged leave to join the box party late. He had some work to clean up after lunch but would be able to get away by three, before the third act, anyway. No, he hadn't seen the play; he had wanted to go very much. Box B, the second lower left; Faversham was splendid. "I'll be delighted, Enid . . ."

She was one of those friends whom Maynard had known all his life, whom he still regarded as a girl, and thought of, more often than not, as he had known her then—a shy, pretty creature who had worn her hair down her back and never looked at any one but Jeffrey Wilkinson. To him Enid Wilkinson had changed little in spite of her unhappy marriage and widowhood. She was still the same quiet, self-contained person, rather difficult to know. She and Augusta went about much together, and Maynard waltzed with her occasionally at the "balls" and exchanged scraps of talk with her at dinners and receptions—when she went, which was not often.

And now, out of a clear sky, invited to one of Enid's parties—a children's matinée—and as the only adult male. . . . Well, it was curious, but it might prove quite amusing.

Leaving the brick factory building in the dingy manufacturing district along the river, Maynard caught a street car that dropped him on the main business thoroughfare of the city. It was a typical old-fashioned Saturday afternoon; streets and stores were crowded with busy shoppers, townspeople buying food for Sunday, and country folk in for diversion and the monthly city purchases; men roaming about in the freedom of a half-holiday; the corner saloons aglow and noisy with loud talk and cheap mechanical music. And in the air the large, slowly hurtling flakes of a March snow. Against Maynard's face they brushed almost caressingly, feeling soft and refreshing in the instant before they melted; and he took deep breaths of the clean damp air, at the same time quickening his pace among the jostling crowd. An exhilaration stole over him, the afternoon wore a novel aspect of freedom, almost of

adventure; and he felt grateful, and secretly a little flattered, that Enid had thought of asking him.

Passing a confectioner's shop, he yielded to a sudden impulse and entered; but confronted by the expectant clerk, he hesitated. There was also Augusta; it had been a long time since he had bought her candy. Perhaps . . . yet it seemed absurd to carry two boxes into the theatre, the play half over—and of course they already had candy at a matinée.

"Did you wish something?" the clerk snapped.

"Five pounds of the assorted bon-bons," he answered; and as he left felt pleasantly virtuous for having remembered his hostess.

The first usher encountered in the large and ancient "Grand Opera House" reported that the third act had just begun. The play was a three-night run "direct from New York," in the usual sense of stopping en route from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati; but the company was almost the original, and its press agent had remained within the truth in announcing "The Blue and the Gray" as one of the chief attractions of the local season. Across the dark rows of heads in a crowded house Maynard's gaze was drawn by the softened lights of the stage. The scene showed a southern Colonial mansion (time, lilac time, judging from the sprays of purple blossom about the house, although cotton grew abundantly on the back-drop and a verdant summer valley stretched beyond). Dim lights twinkled and flashed in the distant valley; the footlights softened to indicate the growing dusk; a solitary Confederate soldier walked guard across the stage. Suddenly a girl appeared on the steps—beauty in crinolines and curls. She paused. The soldier disappeared. Then she ran lightly, breathlessly down the steps. The audience drew a long breath. The Love Scene!

Reluctantly, Maynard looked away and hastened to the darkened box. On the threshold he waited, peering around the heavy curtains. No one heard his step. Rising above the plush railing the three heads of the boys were sharply

silhouetted against the light of the stage; they were leaning far forward, hushed and tense. At one side he recognized his wife; sitting erect, statuesque, her classic profile visible to him, as calm and motionless as a mask. And here in the shadow against the curtain, an uncertain blurred outline, sat Enid Wilkinson.

. . . Out of the dusk the hero had appeared; the Union Captain who had stolen through the lines to meet his love. What madcap daring! Ah, what a figure in his perfectly fitting blue uniform, carefully mud-stained; what flashing dark eyes—what virile grace and ardour as he draws the trembling girl to him.

"Annabel!"

"George—you!"

An ecstatic quiver running through the house like the soft ripple of a field of grain. . . .

Maynard smiled. But it was a reminiscent, indulgent smile; he had read the book when it first appeared during the earlier vogue of the historical romance. It was all quite familiar, obvious. In a moment the Confederate soldier would suddenly return, the hero strike him down; Annabel, in a fine frenzy of despair and courage, would hide her lover in the nick of time. Then the discovery, the great spy scene with the fair heroine vainly interceding, the distant battle, the nicely timed rescue by the victorious Union troops, the kiss, the curtain. . . .

He pushed the portière aside noiselessly and entered. Only Augusta immediately sensed his presence; she turned and whispered a "hello." He stood still, a little awkwardly, waiting to greet Enid; but her eyes were riveted on the stage, and with her chin supported on a slender hand she looked like some frozen votary of the eternally romantic. The boys had not moved. The hero was telling the girl of his love . . . "and that night, in the bivouac before the battle, I dreamed of you." Enid stirred restlessly. Maynard touched her lightly on the arm; she looked up quickly with shining eyes, then

smiled and extended her hand. "You startled me . . . you came just in time," she whispered; and suddenly the colour flooded her face. "Just push those wraps off—on the floor, anywhere."

"I'm sorry," Maynard answered. "I didn't want to spoil it," and he sat down between Enid and his wife. But he knew that he had spoiled it; the spell was broken, the golden moment gone. He slipped the candy under his chair and turned to watch the play.

Charles, the big freckle-faced boy in the centre, was apparently beginning to weary under the continuing strain of the sentiment; but the younger boys were breathless; and to Maynard's surprise, his son seemed now the most intensely engrossed of all the party. From time to time Godfrey looked about the house; to Stuart, the house did not exist. Suddenly he sighed —a long, wistful, unconscious sigh.

"I declare, the boy's fallen in love," Maynard whispered to his wife, who was looking toward the opposite row of boxes.

She stared. "In love?" she asked sharply. "With whom?"

Enid unexpectedly laughed. "After the first act he announced that she was awfully pretty."

"By George, she is," Maynard replied.

Twin spots of colour showed in Augusta's cheeks. She sniffed: "She's forty, if she's a day."

But at this moment the soldier returned, the Captain seized him, there was a scuffle and the loud report of a rifle; the act was closing in a great crescendo of suspense as Annabel hid her lover.

The curtain came down and the house was suddenly brilliant with lights and noisy with a confused murmur of voices. Maynard brought forth the candy and presented it to his hostess. She smiled at him strangely, and in the new illumination of the box he thought she looked smarter and prettier than he had ever seen her.

"Thanks ever so much. Boys, look here!" she cried.

Only Stuart had not heard; he still sat motionless with his eyes fastened on the curtain.

"Stuart, your father's here," said Augusta.

"Oh!" The boy slowly turned about in his chair. "Hello, Dad."

"Well, what do you think of it?" Maynard asked.

"It's fine," answered Charles, who had become the boys' spokesman, and the others assented with a look. The orchestra struck up a medley of Civil War pieces, coming presently to the inevitable "Dixie," and the house broke into spontaneous applause: significant gesture, for these were the children of the war generation, and to them the gay swinging air evoked the war as they thought of it—a romantic memory, stuff to build pretty love plays of.

The lights went out, the curtain slowly rose, revealing to Stuart the very heart of wonder. Again he had forgotten his father, his mother, the others in the box. Again the beautiful lady. And now they were tearing the Captain from her. They would shoot him as a spy. She was weeping, weeping. . . . Would no one help such beauty in distress? He was on the verge of tears himself when the triumphant climax came and the Union soldiers swept on the stage. A few feet behind, his father was remarking that these particular "supes"—the Union Army—looked and acted like Coxey's host of unemployed. Stuart did not hear. To him the uniforms were splendid, the muskets things to look at reverently. . . .

The curtain descended for the last time. Like a somnambulist, Stuart followed the party out. They reached the outer world, the humdrum unreal world; he was being helped into a carriage; he was alone with Gobie and his father and they were moving off. (The others had crowded into Enid's brougham, which had come up first.) What was her name? He had forgotten what the programme said, but her real name was Annabel.

Gobie was answering a question. "I liked it best when the soldiers came on at the end."

"And you, Stuart?"

"What?"

"Which part did you like best?"

"I don't know," he replied truthfully. He sighed. "She—she was fine."

But little Gobie, who had always been his mother's boy, whom the play had intoxicated and given a sudden assertiveness, spoke up: "She wasn't half as pretty as my mother."

And Maynard fell silent, thinking of Enid Wilkinson.

CHAPTER IV

SUNDAY, OLD STYLE

I

IN THOSE motorless days before the rise of the golf course and the decline of the pulpit, the typical Sunday remained a day of dinner, church, and dignified inhibitions. An anachronism to the Twentieth Century, it nevertheless flourished, in the year 1901, in all the sunset splendour of the approaching end.

Like nearly everything in Maynard's life, his Sundays had become a compromise. Old Moldenhauer, since the death of his wife, seldom went to church. His daughter's natural piety, proceeding less from a thirst after righteousness than from a deep conviction that Christianity needed her and a laudable desire to put down evil in the world, would have prescribed regular church attendance in any case. With her father derelict in his duty, with the eyes of the more devout sometimes straying to that blot in the scutcheon, the brewery, Augusta secretly felt that it devolved upon the Maynard Evanses to make up a parent's deficiencies. A Presbyterian on her mother's side, she had entered the Episcopal Church of Maynard's family eagerly; its ritual had a fine old flavour of distinction, and St. Mark's sheltered the most fashionable congregation in town. A further factor, the force of habit in a nature addicted to routine, contributed to filling the Evans pew regularly every seventh day.

If Maynard occasionally rebelled, if there were fine spring mornings when the fresh countryside beckoned, or bleak winter mornings when a wood fire and a book appealed

imperiously, Augusta took Stuart in his stead. The boy's plea that Sunday-school should suffice was suppressed with German discipline.

But though Maynard went from a sense of duty he usually enjoyed the service. The æsthetic side of his nature, far stronger than the religious, responded to the music and liturgy, even when his ironic humour mocked at the affectations of the rector, the Rev. Roger Bleytant, D.D. The Reverend Bleytant's manner struck him as pompous; the rector's advanced pronunciations—"eye-thair," "neye-thair," "cogneye-zaunce," and the final "*s*" fairly hissed out—got on his nerves; he felt a temperamental antipathy to "preaching" and disliked too serious enthusiasts in any cause. Yet Bleytant "got off a good thing once in a while"; and there was this about church: it gave you a greater zest and appreciation for the rest of the day.

The rest of the day—ah, that was worth the living. There were a few friends for dinner—Maynard was fond of people; there was his brother Arthur, the only close relation left to him; and always the old man, whom he had grown to like as well as respect. There was the pleasant old custom of the ladies leaving the men in the dining room over coffee and port—a custom which Augusta had frowned upon, owing to the inconvenience caused the servants, until her father had sided with Maynard. Then the peaceful, drowsy afternoon, when one talked until sleep overtook him, or listened to good music, or on fine days took rambling walks or rode horseback with Stuart; and in the evenings a book and to bed early. At such times Maynard's mood softened into an urbane benevolence; his wife had receded very far into the background, leaving him at peace.

It had been a gorgeous spring. And to-day, the first Sunday in May, seemed to Maynard the final perfection of weather, the apotheosis of spring into which the preceding six weeks of sunshine and warm rains had gloriously culminated. With the last days of March, the trees had begun to bud; the month had

fulfilled the proverb by going out like a lamb; and through some kindly miracle no late frost or April snow had come to blight the earth's awakening splendour. Peonies and a few June roses were already blooming, and everyone spoke of the unusual and prodigal weather.

Rising early, Maynard had revelled in his shower; and bursting into Stuart's room had playfully pulled the boy out of bed and treated him to a good-natured and somewhat one-sided pillow fight. At breakfast in the pleasant sun-flooded dining room, his spirits had mounted to such a peak of gaiety that even Augusta caught the infection and joined Stuart in laughing at his sallies. But when, after an elaborate eulogy of the weather, he proposed a horseback ride in lieu of church, she immediately sobered. This was the first time she had worn her new tailored dress, and there were so few Sundays left before the summer closing of St. Mark's, it seemed only fitting that they should show their loyalty to good Doctor Bleytant by helping swell the attendance. "You know he gets so discouraged when people don't turn out," she reminded him, "and everyone ought to give him a happy summer, Maynard, by making him feel we're behind him."

"Just so," he answered mildly. "Bleytant's summer should be enriched with lovely reminiscences of pious faces rising above new spring gowns." He laughed, but instantly perceived he had gone too far. "No, no, my dear; you're quite right. By all means go. Only let me take Stuart for a good ride in the country. Then when your pastor comes back in the fall, and we come back, we'll all turn out to welcome him—and if possible get a pew a little nearer the pulpit, so he can see our bright, earnest, inspiring faces and feel——"

"Maynard! I won't have you speak that way."

"And feel that the hungry sheep are looking up once more."

He should have known better than to meet her angry stare, the toss of her head toward Stuart, with a smile. She pushed back her chair; her voice was acrid and determined:

"Stuart, you have less than an hour till Sunday-school. I want you to really brush your hair and put on another pair of stockings. And don't hide those away—leave them out where Anna can darn them. You'll have to hurry."

As the boy left the room Maynard's smile died out. He spoke gravely, in a low voice:

"I don't see why you can't let him off to-day. It will do him more good to be out of doors."

But she was too thoroughly incensed, beneath her calm, to note his changed demeanour. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she flung out. "You, with your hateful sneers and scoffing—what do you want your son to think? I suppose you think it's smart to teach him disrespect for religion and his mother."

"Not at all, my dear. I meant no disrespect, and I'm truly sorry if it appeared that way; but really I don't think Stuart——"

"It won't hurt him to go to Sunday-school, or you to go to church," she broke in. "He can be out all afternoon. I've planned for him to take the boys for a ride in his pony cart."

Indeed Stuart was to be host to an early dinner party of Henry Dupree and Charles and Gobie Wilkinson; and Augusta congratulated herself on having, at a single stroke, silenced her husband's objections and arranged to get the boys out of the way. At one o'clock her father, Enid Wilkinson, Arthur Evans, and Doctor and Mrs. Dupree were coming for dinner. Everything would work out beautifullly if the boys sat down by twelve. . . .

She had already forgotten her husband. "I do hope that older Wilkinson boy will behave and not try to boss the others," she pursued. "Enid's never made him mind . . . she's not the type to raise boys."

"I wouldn't criticize her if I were you. She's had a hard enough time of it, and I think she's done pretty well." His face suddenly hardened. "As for church, of course it won't hurt

us. It will doubtless do me good to drop this unseemly flippancy—oh, I'm quite serious now, my dear—and assume a grave decorum. Gravity, sobriety, decorum—the three Christian virtues. I am reminded of what that notable divine, the Reverend Laurence Sterne, had to say on the subject of gravity. Ah, you disappoint me by not asking who he was. No more breakfast, my dear? Well, I'll come up pretty soon." He rose as she left the table. "'. . . A mysterious carriage of the body to cover up certain defects of the mind. . . .'"

He stood for a moment, looking out of the big bay window across the sweep of green lawn, touched with shifting patches of sunlight and cloud shadows. A song sparrow carolled to him. "Oh, the devil," he groaned suddenly, and walked toward the stairs.

II

Old Moldenhauer put down his wineglass and faced Enid Wilkinson genially.

"No, I didn't go this morning," he answered. "There was too much in the papers about the war."

"All good news, too, wasn't it, Pappa?" Augusta asked.

He nodded smilingly, as his jaws moved slowly on a piece of roast beef.

Doctor Dupree, a large, pink, shiny-faced man, prematurely bald and noted for his good humour, remarked mildly:

"The Boers are certainly showing that they can fight. I must say I'm not sorry to see them give the British a licking."

"Well, personally I have nothing against the British, being about half Welsh and half English." A trace of asperity in Arthur Evans's voice caused everyone to look up.

He was of shorter, stockier build than his brother, sandy-haired and brown-eyed, and revealing his past and present occupations in his erect military carriage and incisive speech—the speech and mannerisms of the lawyer. Three years before he had dropped an unthriving law practice to join the Volun-

teers, and after proving his immunity from yellow fever in Florida had won a captaincy and arrived at Santiago three days before the capitulation. The brief action in which he had thereafter engaged served to stamp Arthur, in his own mind, as a military man; and his satisfaction was pardonable, for on his return he had found himself looked up to as a veteran and the very devil of a fellow. From next to nothing his legal practice had grown to respectable proportions for so young a man; he had turned down opportunities to join the two leading firms in town, and ranked as one of the "coming" free lances in the profession.

Arthur liked the army, which had offered a little excitement and a great deal of free and easy fellowship. He had always termed himself a "drinking" man, and a love of convivial companionship remained the one apparent obstacle to his success. Still a bachelor at thirty-five, Augusta was bent on finding him a suitable wife; nearly everyone thought Arthur ought to settle down.

He ended an awkward silence by exclaiming: "Of course, there's lots to be said for the Boers too.—Augusta, is this your 1885 Sauterne?"

Doctor Dupree mechanically emptied his glass, then looked about in some embarrassment.

"And what have you been doing lately, little lady?" old Moldenhauer inquired gently, turning to Enid Wilkinson.

"Nothing unusual," she replied. "The boys and my garden take up most of my time." Suddenly feeling herself the focus of a languishing conversation, she coloured slightly, and added: "I enjoy them . . . so much."

From the far end of the table Maynard studied her; and when she raised her eyes he avoided them, shifting his gaze to her quick, graceful hands. He tried to envisage her in her flower garden, but could not; he saw her only as she appeared opposite him, in a simple summer gown trimmed with lace at the throat, the slender finely turned throat of a girl. . . .

He roused himself. At his right Mrs. Dupree, a plump,

vivacious little woman, was speaking to the table: " . . . awfully artistic. She gave a reading—'The Bishop'—oh, what was it?—something—ah—from Browning. . . ."

"'The Bishop Orders His Tomb in Saint Praxed's Church,'" Enid Wilkinson answered.

"Yes—'The Bishop Orders His Tomb in Saint——' well, she did it wonderfully. Then she played some Debussy for us—played very well, didn't you think, Augusta?"

"Yes, very well; though I wish she'd played something else."

Mrs. Dupree's ample bosom heaved with a long breath, and she looked triumphantly about the table.

"She's quite *fin de siècle*, as Professor Charles would say," Enid remarked.

"Fanned what?" queried old Moldenhauer in obvious bewilderment; and when Augusta explained in an aside: "It's French, Pappa, meaning 'the end of the century,'" he snorted scornfully: "French, humph! Well, we're not in the end of any century now," and glumly attacked his dessert.

Maynard turned to Mrs. Dupree. "Who is the cultured lady in question, may I ask?"

She looked at him in surprise. "It's a Miss Beulah Diddle, who teaches piano and elocution—a Vassar woman; perfectly charming and very talented, don't you think, Augusta?"

"Brilliant," her hostess answered with conviction.

"If she plays well I should like to hear her," old Moldenhauer said simply; to which his daughter returned:

"You shall hear something better this afternoon, for Grace here has promised to sing"; and a moment later the ladies left the table.

Coffee was served by Virgil, the coloured butler, and Maynard started the port and cigars on their rounds. The vague irritation which had possessed him since morning was dissolving, now that his wife and Enid Wilkinson had gone; and even when Arthur asked for bourbon in place of port, and Maynard's instinct of the older brother who had always known greater

responsibilities and a stricter social obligation, tempted him to shake his head in disapproval—even then the gentler current in him asserted itself, and he complaisantly brought the whisky from the sideboard. The dinner had been excellent; the torpid midday sunlight turned the port to liquid ruby, and mellowed the faces of his guests beneath the haze of tobacco smoke that seemed incense-like and sensuously sweet. He stretched out his legs and smiled in sudden contentment.

"You know," old Moldenhauer genially trumpeted, "I never hear about artistic women that I don't think of a friend of my wife's back in the 'seventies—a Mrs. Turner." He related how Mrs. Turner, who painted china and posed as an apostle of light among the Philistines, always referred to her father as a sculptor; how a friend had accidentally been stranded in Thermopylæ, Ohio, her birthplace and the "sculptor's" home; how the news travelled back that Mrs. Turner's artistic sire found his creative medium in tombstones and conducted an undertaking parlour on the side. The story was well told, and Arthur Evans enjoyed it particularly: at its close he said:

"Well, I'm with you when it comes to all this hoity-toity about art. These women's clubs make me sick. A lot of women wasting their time reading poetry and discussing the latest Lord Fauntleroy mush, and dressing up their kids like the illustrations in the latest novel—blah, I say. Of course, I make exceptions of the ladies present—they've had some background for culture. But the ones who haven't——"

"I don't agree with you," old Moldenhauer cut in. "There's nothing criminal about the women learning, is there? The men have no time to read; at least, I've never had enough for music and good books. But I believe in them, gentlemen. Let the women——"

Arthur in turn interrupted: "I thought you just gave a rather salient illustration of the effect of a little education on a certain type of woman," he said with a grin.

"But that has nothing to do with it. Nothing—*gar nichts!*"

The old man's temper suddenly flared up; he sputtered with indignation: "Why—why—that is unreasonable, that is——"

Catching his brother's eye, Maynard slightly shook his head. He disapproved of Arthur baiting his father-in-law.

"I wasn't altogether serious," Arthur smiled. "Of course, it's all right for women to cultivate their minds—when they have any to cultivate. What I deplore is the waste of time for the ninety per cent. whose literary standards can never be raised above Laura Jean Libbey."

"It strikes me," Maynard remarked pleasantly, "that you know a great deal about the subject. Has the Ladies' Friday Reading Circle been trying to lionize our Arthur?"

"Here, give me some more bourbon," Arthur grinned.

Meanwhile Doctor Dupree had engaged old Moldenhauer's interest in politics, and the conversation tacked, this time away from shoals and sandbars. McKinley—a good, safe man—was starting his second term; things were running smoothly; business was everywhere excellent, and all the indications pointed to a long era of prosperity. Indeed, there reigned such perfect unanimity of opinion, and the topic was so threadbare, that Maynard's attention soon wandered. He felt a sudden desire to talk with Enid Wilkinson. She had been charming, he thought, at dinner; she was one of the few good listeners he knew. The room, so pleasant a moment before, now seemed stuffy, and he wished himself out of it—out of doors. At the first lull in the conversation he proposed rejoining the ladies; and old Moldenhauer, hearing his daughter at the piano, eagerly led the way.

Between the drawing room and the glass-enclosed conservatory a small alcove served as Augusta's music room. A vase of peonies hid the accompanist; Mrs. Dupree stood by the grand piano, a little self-conscious as she fumbled several sheets of music. Long familiar with old Moldenhauer's passion for Wagner, she sought an aria suited to her well-ranged contralto voice, powerful and clear but not highly trained. Enid had remained on the sofa in the drawing room, a solitary figure of

detachment, as motionless as a miniature bronze Naiad on the table near by.

Mrs. Dupree's voice floated through the room:

> "*Dich, theure Halle, gruess' ich wieder. . . .*
> *Froh gruess ich dich, geliebter Raum.*"

The men filed across the room and stealthily placed chairs near the piano in the alcove beyond. Maynard helped the doctor to a seat, then turned toward the sofa, a little uncertain whether to intrude upon Enid's privacy of place. She looked up and smiled a cordial invitation; the smile illumined her face so that he had a fleeting sensation of partaking in some secret and instinctive happiness. He was about to take an armchair at her right when he noticed her nervous, slight movement toward the corner of the sofa; and delighted with this gesture of welcome, he sank into the cushions beside her.

"Her voice sounds lovely here," she whispered; and he wondered at the sudden feeling of intimacy created by her whisper and their remoteness from the others. But presently she turned her head toward the windows and seemed to resume her reverie.

Leaning back at ease, Maynard studied her obliquely. A curious emotion was rising in him—an awareness of the aloofness and delicacy of the woman beside him; and with the mental quickening brought by the music, he sought to analyse, no less than to account for it. For all that he knew of Enid's life, there remained infinitely more that he did not know; and this unknown piqued his curiosity. A sense of her personal mystery, of unfathomed reserves of personality, seemed to cling about her like a faint perfume; it was a subtle component of her charm. But there was another quality, Maynard told himself as his eye followed the outline of her cheek and neck and rested again on her sensitive hands: an extreme femininess which kindled a desire to protect and gave a deeper channel to his pity. It was a softness, a suppleness of mind and body. A sudden realization

of her fragile, mute beauty, so delicate as to be felt rather than seen, swept over him.

Was it his pity for her which made him feel an exaggerated sensibility in her presence? Perhaps; but he had felt sorry—or almost as sorry—for some other women; yet this feeling about Enid was new to his experience, as novel as any conscious idealization to a mind which he considered skeptical and matter-of-fact.

The "matter-of-fact" mind flew back to Augusta. Even in the days before their marriage, when he believed himself honestly in love, he could remember no such feeling of awe as this before Enid. His wife had appealed to him by her straightforwardness, her strength, her lack, as he had thought, of affectation and cant; he had considered her as an ideal mother of a family, and he wanted that. The rest was illusion, youth, the lure of the money and the chance to fulfil all his boyhood ambitions for wealth and the acquisition of beauty. Certain defects in Augusta he had recognized from the first; he had never placed her on a pedestal. Indeed, he could scarcely recall a time, after his 'teens, when he had consciously idealized any woman. Most of the men he knew were willing enough to put their women in a mental seraglio, guarded by the eunuchs of ignorance and fragile, pretty futility. He never had been. Women were flesh and blood; they had minds, passions, bodies, appetites, and sex. Ten years of marriage with Augusta had simply fixed an earlier attitude of mind, and left him without a touchstone of experience to measure this new emotion.

The music stopped, and with an effort he tried to recall what Mrs. Dupree had been singing. Enid's gentle voice roused him:

"Lovely! I wish she had saved that till the last."

A hum of voices came from the room beyond. He leaned forward:

"We can easily make it the last. Let's go out and walk around the house. It's too fine a day to stay indoors."

"Oh! But——" she hesitated, glancing toward the door; and he added:

"The boys should be getting back any time. We can go out through the library."

But instantly Mrs. Dupree began another song, one of the admired Miss Diddle's compositions—"My Heart is Like a Little Bird"; and Enid shook her head and sank back into the cushions.

A sense of his own folly made him ill at ease; at the same time he felt the more determined to escape after the next intermission, for their discourtesy would surely go unnoticed during one of Mrs. Dupree's loud *finales*. Enid, too, had become self-conscious, and her gaze wandered nervously from object to object in the room. After what seemed an indefinite suspense the song ended. He rose, and putting out a hand to hers, drew her to her feet.

"After she starts singing," he whispered, and she nodded, though her eyes avoided him.

Mrs. Dupree had begun Stevenson's "Requiem," one of his favourites, which she sang splendidly; but as they lingered on the threshold of the library, the song suddenly grated on him, and he shuddered involuntarily at the weird minor chords sounding through the rooms:

> "Home is the sailor, home from sea
> And the hunter home from the hill."

Noiselessly as the shade of some Eurydice his companion followed him to the hall, and they proceeded side by side, without exchanging a word, until they had shut the porte-cochère door behind them.

He took a deep breath and paused to stare along the sun-swept, winding drive. "Isn't it glorious!" he exclaimed. "Now, you aren't sorry, are you?"

"We were awfully rude," she said musingly.

"If you like we can slip back before it's over, and they'll never

miss us." Slowly they began to stroll past the lilac bushes that lined the drive. "Anyway," he added with a gay laugh, "the sin doesn't exist until discovered."

She smiled but did not answer.

"Please don't think I dislike Grace Dupree's singing," he pursued. "But I wasn't in the mood for mere placid appreciation. Sometimes . . . I want to rebel."

"You've been wanting to all day, haven't you?" she asked, looking away.

"Yes," he assented, with an intensity which surprised himself. "Ever since you came."

She turned quickly and his eyes met and held hers for a long moment; there was a softness in her look he had never seen before . . . then she averted her face and stepped away. For an instant he felt dazed. The sunlight struck his senses with overpowering radiance; he fought himself for control. . . . In an imperceptible second the struggle was over. Calmly he came up with his companion, who continued her even pace, her gaze fixed on the ground ahead. There was nothing to say. Impulsively he reached up, cut off a lilac blossom, and without a word handed it to her.

She sniffed its fragrance absently. "Let's walk back by the tennis court," she said quietly. They reached the end of the driveway before he spoke:

"A penny for your thoughts."

"I was debating a question just now—which had better go undiscussed."

"I don't think we need fear to discuss anything, do we?"

"I wonder . . . there are always some things, you know." He felt the not unkindly reproach of her voice.

"But I'm going to tell you, even though you hate me for it!" she exclaimed. She looked behind as if afraid that the big bulk of the house might overhear; the backyard was empty, but she waited until they had reached the tennis-court bench, at the extreme rear, before she faced him.

"I am going to talk about you and Augusta."

He stared at her blankly, but she went on with a resolute, nervous quickness: "You will say it's none of my business and that I'm just a meddler. But—well, it's been on my mind a long time. I always told myself just that—that it wouldn't do any good to meddle. Then I would think of my own married life and wonder whether things would not have been better if someone had come to me and—told me certain things. Of course, the two cases are so entirely different—that is——" She paused, a look of trouble on her face.

"I've known you both so long, and I feel that I understand Augusta better than most people. And the last year or two there have been things I—— Well, she hasn't been happy; and you haven't, either——"

"She told you that?" he broke in.

"No, no. Oh, don't think that. She never confides in me—at least, not that sort of thing. But once when you were away—— I have had a chance to observe, that is all. I'm not trying to pry or find out what's wrong; I simply want to tell you—that I'm sure Augusta loves you—very much. She's peculiar in some ways; she seems stiff and a little Spartan-like at times; but she's got a big heart."

She stopped suddenly. At length he looked up:

"So you blame me?" he asked calmly.

"Oh, Maynard, don't make it hard for me. I didn't mean that, you know I didn't. It's not your fault any more than it's hers. But you can make the effort—she can't. I don't know anything about what's wrong and I don't want to know. . . . I suppose I shouldn't have spoken," she ended helplessly.

"It's just as well you did," he answered. "Only, my dear Enid, I have tried." He leaned forward, reaching for a tuft of long grass at his feet, and slowly, deliberately plucking the sharp blades. "I have tried, and it's hopeless."

"She's still your wife."

"In name only."

A fly buzzed around his hand and dropped to bask in the sun; somewhere overhead a bird wheeled, crying harshly; for a long time neither of the motionless figures on the bench spoke. It seemed to Maynard that his own voice was being reëchoed in his mind—"It's hopeless—hopeless . . .;" and he had the brief illusion that perhaps he had not said the words at all but simply thought them. A sense of their finality hung over him. Enid was getting up, was giving her hair an unconscious pat; he looked at her and felt embarrassed, ashamed of himself for so definitely confirming what she had merely guessed. But she brought his reflection abruptly to an end:

"We must get back. What will they ever think? Do let's hurry." She began to walk rapidly toward the house.

"We'll just say we thought we heard the boys. After all, they should have gotten back—before we took our walk."

"Yes," she returned, "from every point of view," and both smiled.

Constraint closed in on them again. It was as if they had briefly come together in an open space, and then lost sight of each other; the very clarification had pushed them apart. Maynard was conscious of a mutual drawing back; he doubted now the emotion he had so recently felt: it had been the moment and not Enid—the conjunction of pent-up forces within him, a restlessness, the spring, the flowers and wine and sunlight. The eagerness he felt to get away from his companion, and from his own thoughts, seemed definitely to confirm his security from her appeal. With a sensation of relief he suddenly perceived Stuart's pony cart coming up the driveway toward them.

CHAPTER V

EDUCATION

I

THE Evans family, of which Maynard and his brother were the only surviving adult members, had been since its Ohio residence a family of pioneering farmers and lawyers. If never especially distinguished, it could at least pride itself on being "good old stock," possessing, within the more recent memory of man, neither family skeletons nor celebrities. For a century its fortunes had followed a steady upward curve, with but one or two retrogressions. Maynard's father, a Circuit Court Judge, had given the name a place in the community, and Maynard himself felt assured of a growing prominence and regard among the older citizenry of the town. That his marriage to Augusta Moldenhauer had contributed to this happy result he would have been the last to deny; nevertheless, he could look back to the period of his early struggle with satisfaction, and in its enlarged perspective view his career as self-made.

The old Judge had always commanded Maynard's respect, as he had everyone's; but although a good father he had been of little help to the young man. By the time Maynard was ready for college Judge Evans had pursued the phantom of office several years too long; his crowning "run" for Senator had cost him most of the modest competency won from his law practice and judgeship. An idealist imbued with the spirit of reform, gifted with an emotional Celtic eloquence but with little judgment of men, he had fallen victim to the "practical" politics of the post-bellum era; and on his son, working his way through

a small Ohio college by selling everything from 3-B pipes to the collected speeches of James G. Blaine, the lesson had not been wasted. Something of the artist and dreamer had been born in Maynard; something also of mental balance and restraint. He developed the habit of self-criticism and pledged his soul to put down, as if it were the devil, any latent idealism that could not prove itself "practical" to the extent of advancing his interests. Sometimes, of course, there would be weakness and indulgences, but the rule would remain his guide in a materialistic universe.

Certainly other men, provided they were strong enough to achieve a singleness of purpose, did the same thing; they subordinated sentimental yearnings of one kind or another to success. But others managed the process less consciously than he. As a boy he had drawn amazingly well; his mother, until her early death, had encouraged him—"You must keep at it, Mardy, you'll make an artist," she would say. But he laughed at her simple faith, and after the debacle of his father, scorned a career so visionary and so certainly impecunious. To be an architect seemed a practical compromise; one created beauty and was paid for it: one might be somebody in the world. But the cost of the needed education he knew to be greater, in time and money, than he could afford; and the labour of scraping an existence appeared to decrease his potential artistry at the same time that it turned his energies into business. There resulted a new compact with himself and a further diversion of forces; the love of beauty would become the reason for its acquisition. He had always wanted riches, passionately, for their sovereign power, in this young civilization, to create beauty. There was but little loveliness in the town he knew, and most of it belonged exclusively to rich men. The lesson was plain.

After college, Maynard had gone to work in old Moldenhauer's carriage works as a salesman, with the eye of the owner, as his father's friend, benevolently attracted from the first. Long before he won Augusta's favour, he had won her father's;

he had all the qualities—quickness, eloquence, magnetism—which the old man lacked and therefore doubly admired. Gradually he had imposed a steady industry and routine upon a temperament naturally given to irregular but feverish activity relieved by periods of congenial pleasure-seeking. The business became a more insistent taskmaster than old Moldenhauer, who, after the marriage of his daughter, indulgently regarded Maynard's occasional half-afternoon off as a mere regrettable eccentricity; while to Maynard himself the habit of leisure, in even small quantities, seemed for a long while sheer weakness, a falling short of his ideal of self-discipline. After Stuart's birth, however, he relaxed his industry somewhat, and as the boy grew older, often devoted a full afternoon each week to companionship with him. Some day he promised himself to give more; the old man, who disapproved of dilettante diversions and whose application to business was a byword, could not live for ever. The future beckoned as a time of compensatory enjoyment in all that life might hold.

Of what the boy should develop into, Maynard had very definite ideals. From the sacrifice of his own talent he had deduced a practical philosophy of reason and compromise in all things. His life had narrowed—that was a necessary evil; at the same time he believed it closer to actualities and richer in prospects of revelation than it would have been had he remained poor and centred on any of the forms of artistic creation. Stuart might be a born poet or painter, he might take after his maternal grandfather and be a practical organizer and man of affairs; but whatever the boy's tastes and abilities he should know that life was not all art or all business, all thought or action or pleasure. Life was all of these and more. Stuart would be spared much that was disagreeable and all that was sordid, but he should taste of life largely and never be pushed into as narrow a mould as his father had been.

With this ideal in mind, Maynard had early come into conflict with his wife. The first difference had arisen from the

question of public versus private school; Maynard had held for the former, on the broadening principle. At the same time, Augusta had been ambitious for the boy to begin piano lessons, a plan which her husband approved in the abstract, but the execution of which he wished to defer until Stuart had grown older and stronger. A compromise was effected, Maynard agreeing to private school on the condition that the boy's music be postponed for two years. It was a case of an inch preceding the proverbial ell. Now the two years were nearly up, and Augusta was insistent on starting the piano lessons without further delay. The subject announced itself abruptly one evening at dinner; his wife had decided that Miss Diddle, all things considered, would make a better music teacher for an eight-year-old boy than old Professor Shoener.

"You remember Grace Dupree sang one of her songs last Sunday," she reminded him, following a brief review of the qualifications of the rival nominees.

Maynard remembered better than he cared to acknowledge. He had not seen Enid Wilkinson since that afternoon, and the recurrence of their interview among his mental processes had troubled him all week.

He waited until they had finished dinner before accepting the challenge; from experience he knew that Augusta was a better listener when ensconced comfortably in a large chair, over her sewing, after a good dinner. A remark upon the freshness of her appearance and the becomingness of her gown served as further preliminaries. At length, having lighted a cigar and puffed judicially for a time, he began:

"You're the one to say about a music teacher. I've never seen this Diddle woman, and I'd be no judge anyway of her ability, either as teacher or pianist. You pick out the one you want. Only I do wish, Augusta—I wish you'd give up the idea." She bridled immediately, and he hurried on, anxious to keep the offensive: "Now, wait just a minute—don't take offence until I tell you what I mean. I see your point of view, but

I've been looking at the thing all along from another angle. It's all right for Stuart to take up something; he'll always be glad for it later on, if he does. The only question is whether he should take it up so young, especially during the time of year when he ought to be getting out of doors as much as possible. If you start him now, you're making music the main thing. Now, I think you'll agree that we want him an all-around boy and man; we want his education to be balanced. Unless he's got a great deal of musical talent—which I don't think he has—we have no right——"

"You don't think he has—well, that's a nice way to talk," Augusta broke in. "How in the world can you tell anything about it until he has at least taken some music? You just admitted you were no judge of such things." She straightened up, and her voice became bitter: "Of course I'm trying to ruin the boy's life by making a musician of him. Of course he has plenty of time to play soldiers or Indians or read trashy books; but any talent he might get from any one but his father is worthless and must be discouraged. Can't I make you understand that a little training is absolutely necessary now if he's ever going to play worth a rap? You seem to think it will stunt his growth some way. *I* say the summer's the very time for him to start, for he'll have nothing else then to keep him indoors."

"But it isn't summer yet; he's got another month of school," Maynard objected; "and if we go to Germany this summer he'll have only a few months at best. Why not leave the question until fall?"

As rejoinder Augusta observed that the way to start was to start, and that a month of school plus music would not prove fatal. With a feeling of having lost ground, Maynard mustered all his patience and began a direct attack:

"I think he'll be a stronger man and just as good a musician if we wait a few years more. Now, just a minute—neither of us will gain anything by losing our tempers. I want you to put yourself in the boy's place. Five days a week he goes to school,

with about two hours each day for pure fun, playing with other boys, or reading what he wants. I don't count the recesses or the time at noon, for they're just breathing-spells. Sunday he has—a little religious training in the morning, and a lot of things are forbidden in the afternoon; he has to tiptoe around inside and he can't muss his clothes outdoors. Now wait, please—let me finish. You want him to take two one-hour lessons each week and practise on Saturday mornings. That just cuts in half the time he has for outdoor play—worse than that, for the other boys won't wait around for him to finish. He——"

"He can read less, then," Augusta retorted. "Half his time now he plays indoors or reads. You can't tell me he wouldn't be a lot better off if he learned some music instead of reading Alger books or that Henty rubbish. I'd rather not discuss the matter further."

"My dear woman, I'm not asking you to discuss it, but simply to give me a chance to. Please try to get what I'm driving at." He paused; then went on more calmly: "I've been tickled to death that Stuart likes to read, and I'm against anything that gets him out of the habit. As for Alger, of course it's trash, but every normal boy has to go through the Alger and Henty stage; it's part of their education. Boys want adventure, action. The younger they are the cruder they like it. Of course I want Stuart to get to something better, and he will. He was crazy about Ernest Seton Thompson's 'Two Little Savages,' and he eats up the *Youth's Companion* every week—you can't reproach him for that. He's still a bit young for Dumas and Stevenson and 'Lorna Doone,' but they'll come in time. But you got me sidetracked. The point is that he needs play and reading for his normal growth, and he doesn't need music for a long time yet—if ever. I mean absolutely need it."

"He may not absolutely need it, but he's going to get it. You said a year ago you'd let him start." She had risen, a majestic figure of determination. "He's going to be able to do something more than just chew the rag, as you for ever do. I'm sick

of your eternal talk, talk, talk. *He's going—to start—next week.*"

The crystal pendants of the mantel candlesticks clinked and tinkled as she left the room.

II

At breakfast the next morning Augusta declared her intention of going abroad with Stuart at once. If her father would leave with her so much the better; if not, she and the boy would go alone and open the Roemerthal summer place. How soon? . . . Well, this was the middle of May; she could get packed up and be off, she thought, by the first of June. If that were too early for Maynard he could, of course, join them later. The gauntlet down, she waited, hostilely, on her husband's reply.

Deliberately Maynard munched an extra piece of toast, and his forehead puckered into a frown.

"When did you decide?"

"I've been thinking of it for some time. I made up my mind definitely last night."

After a moment of silence she continued: "It would be a good thing, of course, if you might get away for the entire summer and come with us; but if you can't, you can't——"

"I didn't say I couldn't get away."

She looked up in surprise. "Oh, well, if you can manage it, come along. I merely imagined you couldn't; you never were able to before, and you've been talking about how much you had to do at the office."

"What about Stuart?"

"Why, he's going with me, I told you. He won't miss over two weeks of school."

"I mean, what do you plan to have him do over there?"

"He'll have a quiet beneficial summer at Roemerthal. I want him to take up German, and I insist on the music. I can probably get the same tutor he had before. And I'll see that he gets out of doors enough, since you're so anxious about that."

He finished his coffee, lit a cigarette, and smoked in silence.

"I didn't say I couldn't leave, but I don't think I can—or will. Of course, I'll join you later, say the middle of July. But I've been thinking—I also did some thinking last night. It's evident we have gotten on each other's nerves. No doubt my talking bores you. And instead of agreeing about Stuart, as we should—well, we don't agree, and we must, that's all. We've got to get on better for Stuart's sake, if not for our own." He glanced at Augusta, but she was staring at the floor; and he went on: "Anyway, I'm inclined to think it will be a good thing if we get out of each other's sight for a while. Don't think I wouldn't like to go with you, for I would; but it will do you good to get away from Columbus and from me. As for Stuart, I'm willing to compromise; he shall start the music, but I certainly reserve the right to stop both that and the German when I come. The boy's got to have some vacation. Why, my Lord, the summer was made for boys."

In his look there was a mingling of appeal and hopelessness. Augusta met it for a brief second, but there was no trace of emotion in those gray eyes; they flashed a cold determination and turned away. A minute passed; Augusta still said nothing. He looked at his watch and got up.

"I'll have to be getting downtown. We can talk over the details later on. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

As he left the room his final impression was of Augusta sitting motionless at the table, rigid and self-contained; and he suddenly despised her. He was conscious as never before of her mental insulation from him, of their having lost some precious common speech for ever unrecoverable. But in the next moment he recognized that she was not despicable, but a force beyond his reach, invulnerable to his only weapons; and a sense of failure and futility oppressed him.

CHAPTER VI

"IL FAUT QU'UNE PORTE SOIT OUVERTE OU FERMÉE"

I

THE long, hot Middle-Western summer was in full blaze; it was the hottest and driest July, they were saying in Columbus, since the memorable summer of '98. The city, emptied of half its women and children, dozed languidly under parched, cloudless skies; the asphalt of its better thoroughfares was soft and returned a blistering heat; people went about their tasks in listless discomfort and cursed the dog days that had come too early. A few families and many husbands remained, but even the gayest of the temporarily abandoned heads of families planned escape. It was hard to make a pretence of having a good time during such weather, and the clubs and offices were sorry places.

In his office, overlooking the "flats"—that dismal vista of strangled muddy river, brick factories, warehouses, and squalid frame shanties of the Negro quarter—Maynard Evans mopped his brow and wondered how to make the afternoon endurable. Paul Harrison had just telephoned his inability to keep their engagement, which had contemplated a game of tennis at the end of the afternoon, a ride, and dinner on the shady lawn of the Harrison farm. Damn! . . . he would leave the office at three o'clock just the same; there ought to be someone at the club. His irritation had died, heat-prostrated, by the time the office boy dropped the early mail on his desk.

Maynard's practised eye ran through the pile quickly, sorting what seemed to require his immediate attention. Ah—here was

a letter from Augusta, with German stamp; and here—he chuckled happily—one addressed in Stuart's round, tortuous hand. He glanced at the Roemerthal postmark, dated June 25th, then opened the boy's letter and read:

DEAR DADDY:

We got here the day before yesterday and everything is just like it was 2 years ago. It was ruffer on the ocean and I got sick once but not very and mamma let me have ice cream four nights and grandpa took me to see the engines with the enginear I have some new soldiers too that grandpa got me in Hamburg they are reel German soldiers but smaller than the others and he got me some fine cannon and a new boat to sail on the pond. It has 2 masts and top and bottom sails just like a reel skuner and painted red. I went in waiding with it on a string but it got away and the hair oberst got it for me I miss my pony Dickie and there are no boys here to play with Daddy I wish you would bring Dickie with you I will be glad when you come.

With much love,
Your Loving Son,
STUART.

Augusta's letter had the appearance of fulsome length, but the big, plain scrawl, written as if the arm had been employed without motion of the wrist or fingers, took many sheets to say but little:

DEAR MAYNARD:

As I wrote you on arrival at Hamburg we wasted little time but came here almost direct. It was so hot that I was tempted to pick up and try Switzerland for a while, but you know Pappa. Besides there was a greal deal to do opening the house. The housekeeper recommended by old Schliemens was not much good and I had to get rid of one of the maids who was in trouble owing to a soldier. But things are going smoothly now.

Pappa seems to be having a fine time. He is with Stuart and old Oberst von Klingen much of the time. Yesterday I had the two little nephews of the Oberst over for Stuart to play with, boys about seven and nine. The older, a thin, studious boy with glasses, speaks very precise English and is very polite—I would be happy if Stuart knew German half as well. But he took a dislike to him and called

him four-eyes to his face. The younger was very friendly but Stuart was indifferent to him.

I have an excellent music teacher for him and he is to start tomorrow. Young Kuenstler has been in Munich and is very accomplished. His English is good and he is engaged to act as Stuart's companion and teach him German. I have given particular orders that Stuart is to be kept in the open as much as possible on nice days.

I got a nice letter from Enid Wilkinson yesterday and she spoke of having you to dinner and seeing you several times. You said nothing of that in your letter. Is she still in Columbus, or has she taken the boys to Michigan? We were glad to hear you are coming so soon.

Affectionately,
AUGUSTA.

He smiled grimly at the irony of the signature; then took the boy's letter, studied the envelope, and glanced through the whole again; at length he folded both carefully and put them in his pocket.

A fierce resentment against his wife, fanned by the reference to Enid Wilkinson, broke into full flame. Why had she taken Stuart from him? Away off like that, trying to make a foreigner of him—a music master! He got up, pacing the narrow space between desk and windows restlessly; he felt a hunger to see his son more poignant than he had ever known. It was lonely in the house now without him . . . and a full week yet before he could leave. Damn her!

The view out across the flats seemed even more starkly depressing this afternoon than usual. Such hideous, naked squalor! The sun blazed, a huge incandescent cinder in a burnt-out sky; an intolerable humid closeness hung down over the city.

Without apparent reason or connection, he thought of Enid Wilkinson and wondered what she might be doing at the moment.

He must get off those sales letters before he left! While about it, he would dictate a cable to Stuart. Limply he dropped into his chair and rang for the stenographer.

Perhaps Enid might get the flowers he had sent her before he left the office; she would call him up, then, and thank him—perhaps call up anyway to say good-bye.

If she should telephone—Paul Harrison couldn't go; he was free. Perhaps . . . Startled at the train of his thoughts he checked himself abruptly.

There was a little cough. The stenographer was waiting, seated in the corner, pad in lap; she had come in almost silently.

Maynard collected his mental forces for the task in front of him, reached for a file of correspondence and began to dictate slowly. At the end of the third letter, a stereotyped mumbling differing from its predecessors only in the arrangement of its well-worn phrases, he stopped, staring out of the window. It was so frightfully hot!

After a little he would leave for a drive. The man should be down below now with the new phaeton. A handsome turnout, new from the carriage works; and the pair of grays were as pretty and spirited as any in town. Some consolation to think of driving that—his very own—conscious that people whom he passed turned back to look again; that they were pointing him out as the rich Maynard Evans. . . . He might drive past Enid's, even though he had sent a little note with the flowers, saying good-bye.

That blue thing she had worn the other day, with the graceful flowing sleeves that showed her rounded arms—and the delicate curve of her neck . . . he would like to see her in that again.

"Is there any more, Mr. Evans?" The stenographer, a tired, bedraggled girl, stifled a yawn.

"Take this cablegram. 'To Master Stuart Evans, care Frederick Moldenhauer, Roemerthal, Bavaria, Germany. Will see you in three weeks——'" He broke off; there was a boat sailing this next Saturday; he had a good mind to chuck everything and go. Enid would be away; so would the bunch going on that fishing trip to Pleasant River, Bonant and Young and Dupree—a nice midsummer drunk! Might as well leave for

good as take the fishing trip and return for three brief days of work. Enid Wilkinson . . .

A mental germ connected with Enid which his mind refused to develop but instinctively repressed—a mere shadow of a motive—turned the scale.

"Never mind that cablegram."

The girl, stifling a yawn, crossed out her shorthand record. He put back his unanswered sheaf of correspondence with a sudden motion and said: "That's all for to-day, Miss Campbell."

The girl started and rose as abruptly as if some invisible energy had flowed into her. But at the door he stopped her:

"Oh, Miss Campbell——"

"Yes?"

"You don't need to run those off till to-morrow morning. You look tired. Better go home and get some rest."

She glanced at him in quick surprise, almost dropping her pad, made a quick convulsive movement, and was gone.

Remarkable, he thought, how when other women wilted and seemed lifeless with the summer heat, Enid was fresh, smiling, youthful. . . . In all the time he had known her she had never looked so radiant, never been so vibrantly responsive and light-hearted as this summer—at least, never since her marriage, it seemed to him. Youthful? . . . Why shouldn't she? The thirties weren't anything, even when you had a boy of twelve. She must be thirty-three—no, thirty-four. . . . He made a hasty calculation, trying to remember when her birthday came, but could not; though he had a vague impression that it was sometime in the fall, after Augusta's.

Why, Stuart was almost nine. Two weeks ago he had thought of the boy's approaching birthday and wondered what to take him; since then it had slipped his mind. He made a note on his desk memo. pad, and another in the notebook he carried; he would wait until he got to New York and find something really splendid; something which would make the boy happy as only Stuart knew how to be happy. . . .

Ten after three already? Well——

He would wait just ten minutes more, on the chance that she might call up.

Tack—tack—tack—tack. Far across the flats, out on lower Broad Street, the skeleton frame of a new ten-story hotel was being reared; the pecking-away of the steam riveter carried over the city, insistent and faintly penetrating. The old Colonel Simmons house on the corner of Third Street, with its big yard where he had played as a boy, had been swallowed up by the slowly advancing, inexorable tide of business; the yard was now a yawning pit, teeming with workmen and strung with a jagged network of steel. He had always admired the old place with its tranquil, ivy-covered brick tower; liked its quaint iron deer in front, and loved the old elms, the trellised arbour and flower garden and covered well; a host of pleasant recollections swarmed about its peaceful image. . . . Only the other day? It was all of twenty-five years since he had played there. He would be forty soon.

Sharply he sucked in his breath and with his thumb and middle finger rubbed his tired eyes.

A terrible poignant sense of the passing of the years and the desolate routine wastage of his prime swept over him, wave-like, drenching his spirit, dashing its bitterness in his mouth.

She had not called. He closed his roll-top desk gently, letting it slide down without the usual bang, took up his white linen coat, his Panama, and left the office.

But in the elevator something strange and magical happened to Maynard. He suddenly felt cooler, younger, more buoyant. Vanished that depressed feeling of his youth gone by and the uselessness of working on when he had already achieved his ambitions; he had left the drudgery behind, and the carriage and the grays stood there waiting for him, a symbol of success and a promise of pleasure in the infinite variety of the world. What a beautiful thing the new phaeton was. He stood beside it proudly, his æsthetic sense keenly aware of the fine

strength and power quivering in the horses, magnificently controlled; of the lithe polished grace and trimness of the carriage; his face, as he leaned over, mirrored in the immaculate patent leather of the dash. An old employee who had been with the works nearly thirty years, a veteran woodworker when old Moldenhauer bought the plant, came pottering around the corner. He touched his cap with a finger as his glance met Maynard's and swept the equipage with an appreciative eye:

"She's a beauty, that she is, Mr. Evans!"

Maynard felt a warm gratitude for the tribute; the old man had restored his confidence in his sense of values—in his very self. He had forgotten the office, the heat, his rancour toward his wife; he dismissed the coachman with an access of good-nature, and taking the reins called the horses softly by name. He felt suddenly emancipated, and happy in a vague anticipation.

II

Toward three o'clock of the same afternoon, matters were approaching a crisis between Charles Wilkinson and his younger brother Gobie.

The question at issue was whether Gobie should accompany Charles and his newly found companion up Yellow Creek to the "deep" swimming hole, or be a dutiful younger brother and return home alone. Excellent reasons for the latter course suggested themselves to Charles; Gobie couldn't swim, he was just a baby, and he certainly didn't belong in the rarefied atmosphere peculiar to gatherings of mature boys like himself; nor at a swimming hole where the shallowest place was over his head. Besides, he was always obtruding his eight-year-old point of view, asking silly "kid" questions and generally being a bore. At times—and this was one of those times—Charles felt ashamed of him.

Little Gobie, tagging behind and tearfully on the defensive, pointed out that a common mother had solemnly enjoined Charles to look after him.

There was a dearth of places for boys to swim, in or near the little inland city; and the small sluggish stream of Yellow Creek offered the only good pool within pedestrian radius for the "nice" boys of the east end. During the present hot spell, however, most of the latter had left town with their mothers, and Charles, secretly plotting a swim since early morning, had been put to it to find company. Unfortunately, in his predicament he had tarried at home too long; his mother had solved the difficulty for him by proposing that he take his brother wading in the park.

Had Charles been capable of understanding it, he would have instantly rejected, that afternoon, the doctrine of Free Will.

They were already half a mile beyond the park, and the willow trees lining the creek had come in sight, when, turning into a country lane, they had met a stocky, sunburned boy of thirteen or fourteen; broad-shouldered, bushy-eyebrowed, obviously strong.

His voice ravished them. It was a throaty, resonant bass which rose from cavernous depths to inform them that its owner's name was Spike O'Malley, and that he was en route to join a few congenial spirits at the deep place near the dam. He punctuated his subsequent remarks with picturesque epithets and idioms; he had a delightfully casual way, whenever vexed or surprised, or even slightly emphatic, of saying "Jesus Christ." He carried a sack of Bull Durham and was smoking the stub of a neatly rolled cigarette.

Charles had been impressed at once. Gobie had merely felt a vague presentiment of impending tragedy. And now it had come.

With a sense of helplessness in the face of his brother's pitiless logic, Gobie returned always his unanswerable argument:

"Mother told you to take me."

This Charles chose to ignore.

It must be acknowledged that he was at least justified in not taking the smaller boy to the swimming hole. Even if the

latter stayed out of the water there were the other boys—the tough little south-end kids. The more Charles thought about it the more righteous he felt in his refusal; so righteous, in fact, that after twenty minutes of arguments, threats, and pleadings, all of no avail, he seized little Gobie's wrist and twisted it until his brother, shrieking, promised to go home.

Poor little Gobie! He worshipped his elder brother, who seemed to him cast in heroic mould, whose actions generally appeared to carry the authentic stamp of inspiration; and now this divine being had publicly repudiated his company. Charles and the other boy were already gone. Useless to follow them, as he knew by past experience. Filled with a black hopelessness, a sense of his own weakness and inferiority, Gobie sat down and wept.

This afforded such relief to his surcharged feelings that after a little he was able to proceed. He got up, his face dust-caked and streaked with tears, and started his dolorous trek toward Franklin Park and Broad Street. By the time he had reached the winding macadam that marked the eastern boundary of the park he felt tired; the sun had been blistering across the open meadows; and Gobie sprawled down under a big maple beside the road. To his wearied spirit home seemed infinitely far away.

Even the ground and the long grasses under his back felt hot. He lay in the shade, his head on his outstretched arm, and studied a thin wisp of woolly cloud above the serene tracery of the high trees. He longed desperately to be home.

A sudden clatter of horses' hoofs around the bend caused him to sit up, idly curious to see what manner of vehicle might be adventuring this deserted road in the heat of the afternoon.

To Gobie it was a vision. Coming toward him at a fast trot he saw two splendid dapper grays, stepping high and arching their taut proud necks, their brass and patent-leather trappings flashing in the sun; behind, a gleaming phaeton driven by a kindly looking man in white. At the same instant

his gaze met the man's; he recognized him though he could not think of the name; and in a moment a ringing voice cried out:

"Whoa, boy! Whoa, boy!"

The wonderful horses snorted as they were pulled up; the phaeton came to a trembling stop five yards away.

"Why, it's Godfrey Wilkinson, I do believe!"

And then, as Gobie stammered in sheer breathless awe, the cheery voice continued:

"Want a lift, Gobie? Hop in!"

Little Gobie lost no time. With a feeling that he had been invited to enter the pearly gates, he took the outstretched hand and climbed up to that dazzling seat. The kind man smiled and clicked his tongue—the horses sprang forward—they were off to Elysian fields. . . .

Ever afterward that ride seemed as a dream to Gobie. They rushed along, trees and fences and farmhouses springing past; he had never ridden at such speed; the little breeze felt delicious on his face; and always the kind man chatting and laughing beside him. After the first five minutes Gobie got a little used to this intoxication, and by a supreme effort managed to regain a certain calm. Suddenly it came to him who the man was; Stuart Evans's father, of course! In his gratitude and awe and admiration it was borne in upon him that he must say something to show his appreciation. He asked after Stuart in his best parlour manner.

Mr. Evans was pleased—that was immediately apparent; for he told Gobie about his son's letter, about the place where Stuart was staying, about his new boat and tutor, and his desire to see his pony. Conversation flourished; Mr. Evans plied Gobie with questions, and the boy found himself relating the story of his afternoon. And as he talked he gained confidence and was encouraged to talk more; soon he was talking a great deal

"What do you do with yourself on days when you have no one to play with?" his prompter asked.

"Oh!"—Gobie made the *Oh* dramatic—"Oh, nothing much. Sometimes I play with myself, or fix my stamp album, or read. Nothing very much." Then, fancying that he had missed a narrative opportunity, he enlarged on his stamp albums. He had been collecting stamps for three years; he was now on his fourth book; his mother gave him a whole dollar a week for his very own, of which he generally saved out seventy-five cents for his hobby; the rest went for marbles, candy, and odd trifles.

Mr. Evans showed a gratifying interest, saying that he himself had once entertained a passion for stamps. "I should like very much to see your collection," he added; and Gobie felt that his cup was overflowing.

They were in town now, clattering swiftly across a shady, brick-paved street; at the next corner the broad faded awning of a drugstore came in view. There was a twinkle in the man's eye as he turned to the boy:

"What do you say to an ice-cream soda?"

"Why—I would like it very much indeed," Gobie declared primly.

They drew up by the curb in front of the open door. The little shop had been one of the first in Columbus to install a soda fountain, and was now reaping a rich harvest. In his shirt sleeves the Semitic proprietor, assisted by a frowzy youth of watery eye and bilious face, was handing out tall glasses to a dozen hot children and adults. Suddenly he noticed the shadow fall across the door; looked up and perceived the resplendent carriage and grays; and recognizing Maynard Evans, who was beckoning to him, he hurried out to the curb, obsequiously rubbing his hands.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Evans?"

And every eye had followed him and lingered enviously on the carriage, the radiantly happy boy, and the man in white.

For perhaps the first time in his experience, Gobie felt himself set apart from, and definitely superior to, a group of people.

Exquisite sensation! With a baronial dignity he sat and consumed his tall soda, precisely and silently; *noblesse oblige*, such position carried its responsibilities; for all the world he would not have spilled a drop. Never did chocolate soda taste so delicious; never, in spite of all Gobie's efforts to make it last, did soda vanish so soon.

And almost as fleeting and transitory the wonderful drive; already it was almost over; soon it would be a memory. Here ahead of them was Broad Street and the old Victorian brick house that was serving the third generation of Wilkinsons, a relic of the old Governor, Jeffrey's father; a little dingy beneath its vines and its trim in need of paint, but for all that, Gobie secretly thought, the finest house in town. (Its square tower and arched Victorian "French" windows had inspired that celebrated impiety of his father's—"American railroad station Gothic.")

"We'll just drive back and leave the horses with your mother's coachman," Mr. Evans was saying, "and then we can walk to the house and surprise her. You're sure she's home?"

"Oh, yes, sir. That is, I think so. She said she wanted us out of the house while she packed." Gobie for the first time in almost an hour thought of his brother, and a slight shadow crossed his mind. But it soon lifted, for his companion continued to ask about his mother: Had she gone out much lately? —Had she been at home all day?—Was she glad they were going away? Gobie wasn't sure about her being out—he had been out himself a good deal the last few days; he didn't know whether she was glad they were going or not, but he thought she probably was. *He* was glad they were going; it was nice at Harbor Point, and he intended to learn to swim, if only Charles would help him. Then, as the kind man remained disappointingly taciturn, he added:

"Yesterday Mother said she wasn't going just yet, but would wait awhile. But Charles and I begged her to go right away, and finally she said she would. Charles wants to go

because he's got a girl up at the Bay; she's from Louisville and her name's Dorothy Dean. I wish you were going to be there. And Stuart."

Mr. Evans was suddenly looking very cheerful, Gobie thought, and he rejoiced at his conversational success. He even felt reconciled, since it had to be, when Frank took the horses and the kind man helped him down. . . .

The old parlour was cool and semi-dark with its closed inside shutters, and Gobie, faithful to his mother's training, politely asked his friend to be seated while he sought the maid. He was back in a moment, having airily ignored the latter's suggestion that he go up and wash; he felt a heavy load upon his shoulders, and a degree of awe at being alone to do the honours in that rarely visited region, the front parlour. Moreover, his guest had become unresponsive; Gobie noticed that he was gripping his hands beneath his Panama hat, that he kept smiling and was very absent-minded.

After a while his mother appeared.

She, too, was smiling; she had put on a cool white summer dress and Gobie thought she looked very beautiful. She came into the room with a quick eager step and greeted Mr. Evans cordially; then turned and kissed Gobie. But to his great surprise she did not question him. Mr. Evans was chuckling and explaining about the ride; perhaps his mother didn't realize that Charles had gone off and left him. But in a moment she became severe, exclaiming:

"Why, Godfrey! Your face is frightfully dirty. Go upstairs at once and clean up."

Gobie got up reluctantly. This was the end.

"And you'd better play upstairs until dinner. Come here, dear, and kiss Mother."

She kissed his cheek; her eyes were shining. Then awkwardly, with all his former shyness returned, Gobie advanced to his kind friend, thanked him for the ride, and shook hands.

Yes, it was the end.

In his room upstairs he surveyed himself for a time in the mirror; he felt a little tired again; and after resting on his bed he washed his hands and face. It presently occurred to him that his friend might stay for dinner, and filled with a sudden desire to look well, he changed his waist, put on a Buster Brown collar—his dancing-school best—and gave his hair what passed with Gobie for a brushing. It was the supreme tribute to Maynard Evans's charm.

These operations completed, Gobie went to a back hall window looking out on the stable, and for a long time contemplated the phaeton and the grays. Lovingly his eye took in every detail; and simultaneously he pictured himself, Gobie, a splendidly dressed grown man, driving an identical equipage along proud highways in the never-fading summer twilight.

Ah, if only Charles had seen him at the drugstore.

He retraced the ride, reviewing every emotion, everything his friend had said. They had spoken of stamps; Mr. Evans was interested, he had expressed a desire to see Gobie's collection. Going to a bureau drawer in which his treasures were kept out of the way of Charles, Gobie brought forth the three albums, sat down squat-legged among them on the floor, and began to bring volume III up to date by pasting in his latest purchase, the Guatemalan series of 1901.

He loved these books with something more than the love of a little girl for her doll; for he not only felt the pride of possession, he had in a sense created them by months of mail-order shopping, by self-denial, by the endearing labour of classifying and pasting in. And Gobie knew he had a right to feel proud. Only last week old Gruenwald, the stamp man, had told him his was the third largest collection in town.

Mr. Evans, he reflected, was the kind of man who could appreciate it. He had asked to see it!—and Gobie was leaving for Michigan to-morrow. Surely it would be but a slight return

for all his friend's wonderful kindness to take them down. His mother would understand.

With a large book under each arm—Gobie had to leave volume III for a second trip—he descended to the front hall. The heavy-carpeted stairs gave forth no sound. To his surprise, the large double doors into the parlour were closed, but Mr. Evans's voice, speaking in a low tone, reassured him. Quietly he put one book down, and with his free hand, pushed open the door.

In the curving settle his mother sat leaning back slightly, now looking toward the windows, now glancing with softened, half-averted eyes at Mr. Evans. The latter was bent forward, his chair against the settle, holding her hands and speaking in a queer, pleading voice.

Instinctively Gobie knew he had blundered. At the same instant his mother saw him and cried out his name. Mr. Evans jumped up, his mother abruptly followed. Frightened and confused, Gobie dropped his book with a slapping crash.

What followed he never could remember clearly. He had stammered something about his books, it had been received in silence, his mother and the kind man standing there rigid and unresponsive. Mr. Evans was very red in the face; he kept clenching and unclenching his hands. Then Gobie's mother had come and taken him up in her arms, and held him close, and kissed him. . . .

But presently he felt that everything was all right again, for he heard Mr. Evans call out, "Good-bye, Gobie, have a good time in Michigan." And a moment later his friend came back from the porch, and looked in, silently, at the picture of his mother holding him in her arms. And then the sound of hoofs clumping rapidly down the drive.

That night, as she was putting Gobie to bed, Enid was called to the telephone. Her face was very pale as she kissed him good-night and hurried down the stairs.

The boy, tired out physically and nervously from the long hot day, was soon asleep—a still, unturning sleep in which there were no dreams.

So tired, so sound asleep. . . . Gobie never heard the sobbing of the woman, lying on her bed in the warm fragrant darkness of the adjoining room.

PART II

"Nicias: 'Crains d'offenser Venus.'"

Thais.

CHAPTER VII

AN ONLY CHILD

I

STUART at the age of thirteen definitely resembled his father. His eyes, though of the same shade of steel gray as his mother's, were shaped like Maynard's and wore the same expression of intelligence and twinkling, amused appreciation, without the sardonic gleam which his father's had shown so often during the last few years. They made the boy look old for his age—a maturity belied by his tall, thin, awkward body and strident, high-pitched voice. Yet the face had already taken on a permanent mould—a narrow, high-cheek-boned face, with square, determined jaw.

At thirteen Stuart was already impressed with the multiplicity and complexity of life's affairs. It was intoxicating and a little bewildering, this life of an American darling of fortune at the apex of the Rooseveltian era, when the world seemed safe and old, and America was just realizing, a little tremulously, that she had become a world power. He felt that he was for ever running to catch up with an elusive secret of things—a rule that would order his life and give him something to build on and a set of standards to judge by—and in this race he was always a lap behind.

There were so many things! Every year new studies to take up, new games to learn, new books to read, new playthings, new music, new amusements. There was his new nickel-plated Columbia bicycle, the only one of its kind in town; there were his grandfather's new limousine imported from Germany, and

his father's bright red Pope-Toledo, both of which he aspired to drive; there were his old pony, grown a little stiff and fat, and his new dog. Piano lessons still claimed a portion of his time. For years he had pegged away, dodging them when he could, hating them with an intense concentrated hatred; now they had begun to seem less obnoxious, he even enjoyed playing at times when no one was about to nag at him. And secretly he felt that he played Chopin's "*Marche Polonaise*" and the "Soldiers' Chorus" from "Faust" extremely well—Miss Diddle to the contrary notwithstanding.

Now that it was winter, some of life's brighter charms were in eclipse; baseball was but a memory to haunt his mind on empty days. The summer before had been the first in years when the family had not taken him abroad, and after his father had shown him the wonders of the Pacific Coast and the Portland Exposition, Stuart discovered baseball—a wonderful discovery which led to the complete neglect of all other studies and avocations until early fall. Even then his Uncle Arthur—a prodigious fan—had kept the ball rolling by presenting him with a complete set of Spalding and Reach Guide Books; and best of all, that fascinating treatise "How to Pitch," in which Christy Mathewson discoursed on the throwing of outdrop curves. Maynard and Arthur both marvelled at the boy's memory—he could recite the averages of the three leading batters, fielders, and pitchers in each league over a period of five years. His tutor deplored his almost total lack of the same faculty when it came to Latin verbs; and his music teacher declared the boy was incurably lazy. As a matter of fact, Stuart was neither lazy nor industrious. He applied himself feverishly to anything that caught and held his attention, until a new interest appeared and distracted him. And there was always something new.

The June before he had emerged from the local private school for boys, the proud possessor of a diploma and innumerable graduation presents from fond relatives and friends. In the

ordinary course of events Stuart would have left for prep. school about the time his Uncle Arthur was betting him on the outcome of the World's Series. But events were not always allowed to take an ordinary course by Augusta. She wanted the boy at home for a few years yet; there was no reason why he could not learn more with a tutor catering to his special intelligence and special aptitudes than away, where he would be just one among a multitude of boys. Stuart, she knew, was above the average; she would not have him ruined by merely conforming to a type.

Thus did Augusta anticipate by several years the favourite argument against the American ideal.

Moreover, if he stayed at home he would work harder (she felt sure) at his music. Miss Diddle had reluctantly admitted only the other day that Stuart was not *quite* ready for Boston Conservatory.

To Augusta's surprise Maynard fell in with the plan. It was agreed that Stuart should have a year at home, and at its conclusion, decide for himself whether the following year was to be spent away or under a tutor. But Maynard had insisted on one important reservation: the boy was to have at least two years at prep. school before entering college. Choice of both school and college was to be left to him, and although Augusta might secretly urge Harvard (with work at the Conservatory), and Maynard, Princeton or Yale, the choice was to be really free.

Stuart at first liked his new tutor, an indigent young Harvard graduate named Worthington; and, Latin excepted, he rather liked all these new studies. Algebra was certainly more interesting than arithmetic; Greek and Roman history fired his imagination and fascinated him—he did not lose interest until the issue of the Punic Wars became apparent; French was certainly less of a nuisance than German. Pleased with the boy's quickness, Worthington was rather inclined to push things; when Stuart was not studying or reciting or exercising, he was

encouraged to read "the solid, worth-while classics," Dickens, Scott, and Thackeray. By February Stuart had a superficial knowledge and a thorough dislike of one novel of each of the three. But he had stumbled across Mark Twain and his father had helped him find "Stalky & Co.," "Treasure Island," and "The Three Musketeers." Mr. Worthington noticed one week that the boy could hardly keep awake; he explained that he had read a little the night before. A copy of Poe's "Tales" was found under his pillow. It was promptly confiscated, and Stuart temporarily rescued from an incipient and morbid insomnia.

No day passed without two hours out of doors. Mr. Worthington was not an athlete; privately he conceded that he "tended toward the—ah—intellectual, rather than the—ah—physical." But fresh air and exercise had been coming in during his Harvard sojourn, and he displayed the zeal of a Y. M. C. A. secretary in passing them on to his charge. Stuart was given a morning walk and airing and figuratively kept on a chain. In the afternoon Mr. Worthington let him do track work around the block and indulge in deep-breathing exercises for an hour. When Stuart suggested that they substitute a horseback ride, the tutor playing Porthos to his d'Artagnan, Worthington frowned. Horses affected him in the same manner as ragweed; he had always been rather proud of his hay fever, and could sneeze at the mention of a horse. Boxing? It was not quite the sort of thing for a young gentleman to bother with—Stuart might get a cauliflower ear; he was sure his mother wouldn't approve of a cauliflower ear. Stuart thought him quite mistaken about his mother; whereupon Mr. Worthington hastily switched to fencing. An excellent sport, fencing; it developed suppleness, alertness, mental agility. Ah, no, he was sorry; he did not fence.

By February Stuart was a little bored by Mr. Worthington. But at a word—or rather a quantity of words—from his mother,

he ceased confiding in her as to his tutor's shortcomings. Augusta had made up her mind some time before about the young man; she had, in fact, submitted him for Maynard to engage, and she was not prepared to change her opinion. Mr. Worthington was quietly conscientious, he quoted Goethe and Kant and Schopenhauer—indeed, Augusta could never have written that Ladies' Literary Club paper on "German Thought Since 1850" without him—and he loved to hear her play Brahms. Altogether the right sort of influence for Stuart, and the sooner he buckled down under it the better.

To do his mother justice, the boy was comparatively little spoiled. He knew the folly of persisting in any project, once it had received the maternal veto. Yet he loved and respected his mother, the finality of whose decisions held for him a sort of terrible fascination. If at times he suspected her of lacking a sense of humour, if always she seemed quite remote, this was as it should be. A mother was an imposing goddess who loved one—whose love pursued one with a hard, methodical solicitude—an entity above and beyond understanding.

II

For a number of years, Maynard had worked harder than at any time since the halcyon days when he had put himself through college. Old Frederick Moldenhauer's health had been failing; at the same time the carriage business had suffered a steady decline. With his usual foresight, old Moldenhauer had seen the handwriting on the wall, and he and Maynard had "got out from under" in the nick of time. More and more the son-in-law had assumed control of the extensive family interests; and restlessly, feverishly absorbed in making more money, he had added to them by starting a large drop-forgings plant that required a heavy capitalization and a great deal of time. Young at thirty-eight, the last five years had taken the spring from his step and liberally sprinkled his hair with gray; he looked tired and middle-aged.

On his desk he had once placed a small cardboard bearing the inscription:

> The man who has lost himself in anything, big or small—God, Art, or digging ditches—has done a service to mankind.

It suited his sardonic humour to reflect that this was just the thing to impress business callers and serious under-executives. By its side stood another of his own composition:

> Oh, ain't it great to have a motto?—
> Every successful man has gotto.

It was not the first time he had burlesqued something in which he secretly believed.

These adornments lasted a month; a periodical fit of ill humour ended with the one torn in shreds and the other in the waste basket. But a few days later Hodges, the Assistant Superintendent of the Street Railway Company, had a new framed device over his desk: "The Man Who Has Lost Himself," etc.

During these years Maynard and Stuart had seen less and less of each other. Dog-tired at the end of the day, the father either came home to retire early, or left for his club; seldom arriving home in time to spend the hour before dinner with the boy, as in the old days. Of Augusta, too, he saw but little. She had become addicted to bridge, the new game that the elect were playing everywhere; and only on grand occasions, formal dinners, receptions, and Governors' Balls, did Maynard accompany her. At such times they were excessively cordial to one another; before Stuart and the servants they were polite and considerate. Maynard took occasional business trips, and every winter Augusta went South with old Moldenhauer and the boy. It was agreed that Stuart should not be absent over a month; at the end of that time Augusta brought him back to his studies and left her father at Palm Beach. However, during

those portions of the summer which Maynard "took off" the family presented a united front in Germany. The Western trip of 1905 had been a concession to Maynard—as a counter-concession Augusta had gone along.

Between father and son there was little of the old spontaneity and tacit understanding. Maynard thought the boy a strange enigma at times—half boy, half man, in his moods and mental attitudes; and Stuart found his father always tired and sometimes a little irritable. And yet he had never felt more drawn to this gentle, gray-haired man than during the last year. Perhaps he sensed his father's loneliness; at any rate, it was because of this very strength of feeling, joined to a new self-consciousness, that he sometimes avoided Maynard, or displayed in his presence a strange reticence that troubled them both. Gradually Maynard came to believe that Stuart had somehow grown away from him. It wouldn't do to let things go on like this; the problem of finding an avenue of approach would have to be solved.

This decision had led him to approve of the tutor; but Worthington seemed to take more of the boy's day than school ever had, and the way was not yet clear. No chance for much time alone with Stuart during the week; there remained only Sundays and perhaps an occasional half-afternoon. The year before Maynard had taken up golf and begun to play, in spite of Augusta's objections, on Sundays. Stuart and his mother still attended Sunday-school and church with tidal regularity; but with the end of golfing weather, Maynard had failed to resume his church-going. The boy, he knew, hated Sunday-school. His teacher was a hard-working minor official in the Street Railway Company. A light had dawned.

One Saturday, Phipps—the minor official—was called to Mr. Evans's office. He came out radiant; his first raise in five years had been assured. Certainly not; there would be no difficulty about the matter. . . .

The next morning, a clear frosty morning in February, May-

nard announced that he would drive the boy to Sunday-school. "I won't be going to church," he added after a pause.

"Stuart, would you like to go with me after Sunday-school?" Augusta asked.

"Oh, don't make him go to both," said Maynard.

"Why not?" She was suspicious and a little angry, looking from one to the other.

Stuart caught his father's eye; it instantly avoided his. "Paul Ransom wanted me to come around after Sunday-school and do algebra, Mother," he said.

"Where are *you* going, Maynard?"

"Out to the Country Club and get some exercise."

"But you can't golf in this weather."

"I'm just going for a hike across country."

She sighed and turned away.

In the big lumbering touring car father and son were silent. They passed St. Mark's Church without a word and continued out the level stretches of Broad Street. Several times Maynard felt the boy's eyes on him, but not until they reached the end of the pavement did Stuart speak:

"Where are we going, Dad?"

"Oh, I don't know. Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know."

Again silence. Maynard wanted to ask the boy if he really had an engagement after Sunday-school; Stuart dared not ask his father what it was all about. By tacit mutual consent neither referred to the conversation with Augusta.

"What do you say to a walk around the golf course?" He was about to add "Stuart," but that sounded rather formal; "Stu" wouldn't do either; he sought a nickname that would seem natural and yet bring them closer together.

Stuart was glancing dubiously at his thin boots minus overshoes.

"I brought your galoshes along, old man."

No—that phrase, so easily used when the boy was smaller,

sounded stilted now. Why wasn't there an unaffected form of address between fathers and sons?

"I'd like to walk, all right. But, gee, it's nice riding, isn't it, Dad?" His small voice was lost in the noise of the motor and the buzz of the drive chains—motors were noisy in 1906.

The boy wavered between two desires: he preferred to keep on racing through the keen frosty air without the necessity of talking, for he felt shy at this sudden intimacy and obscurely sensed his father's motive in carrying him off; on the other hand, he was beginning to feel chilled, and a walk, for all its awkwardness, would start his blood racing once more.

As they approached the Country Club drive his father turned to him.

"Which shall it be, Stu?"

A little thing, the nickname, but it decided the boy.

"Let's hike."

They left the car at the clubhouse and struck across the rolling, windswept course, lightly drifted with powdery snow, the ground hard and smooth beneath their feet, the gusty wind impelling them like an unseen giant hand. Speech seemed superfluous; both drank deeply of the keen air and loved the winter morning and the gaunt fields. Gradually the barrier between them softened; nothing mattered any more but the walk and the clean morning. Reaching a little knoll from which the ground fell away in a long sweep toward a patch of woods, Maynard felt an absurd impulse—and followed it:

"I'll race you to the woods!"

Down across the ninth hole they dashed, a good three hundred yards; Maynard leading until his breath gave out and the boy's youth brought him to the fore. Both were breathless and exhausted when they reached the first tree and flung themselves down in the snow. Stuart gasped:

"You'd have beaten me, Dad, if you hadn't had that heavy overcoat on."

Maynard liked that; the boy hadn't changed much, after all,

he thought; under the surface Stuart was the same lovable boy, less loquacious, that he used to play with. Still badly winded, he could only shake his head in dissent. After a moment they got up and started slowly through the woods. There was little wind now, and underfoot it was soft and spongy with the accumulated moisture of winter snows and dead wet leaves; spring was working in the soil, unseen and invincibly secure.

"No, I'm too old," Maynard said suddenly.

The boy looked at him and smiled.

"You must have been a darned good runner, Dad, in your time."

Maynard chuckled beneath his breath. "Do I—seem very old to you, Stu?" he smiled.

"Oh, I didn't mean that. Oh, no, Dad. You seem lots younger than most people—younger than Mr. Worthington, I think."

They had arrived at an open space, and finding a solid-looking log with little snow on it, sat down.

"You don't like Worthington as much as you did, do you?" Maynard asked after a little pause.

Stuart squinted judicially at his feet and took some time before replying.

"No, not much. He means all right, but he never laughs at all, just smiles sort of, as if he were laughing inside all the time and making fun of you. And he don't—he doesn't think of anything but work. He can't play games worth a cent."

"I see."

"Why, you ought to see him, Dad, he throws like a girl. Just like a girl. He couldn't hit a barn door if he tried."

Stuart was frowning, his father biting his lips to keep the corners of his mouth from twitching.

"Hmm—as I suspected, Mr. Worthington is a wee bit of a Jesuit."

"A what?"

"A rather deep young man who knows how to get what he

wants, Stu. The Jesuits were members of a Catholic order in the Middle Ages who gained a reputation for being very shrewd, crafty men. I was given to understand that Mr. Worthington was quite an all-around man—something of an athlete."

Stuart snorted. "An athlete my eye! Why, shucks, Dad, he can't do a single thing. He can't ride, or box, and he can't fence. And he asked me if Christy Mathewson didn't play with Chicago last year—just imagine not knowing any better than that! Oh, he's a Jesuit all right, Dad; he's crafty as anything, and he's got Mother buffaloed *completely*. Why, if I don't know any more when I get through college than he does —about baseball and football and everything, why——" He paused helplessly at the thought of such ineptitude, and could only end in scorn: "Why, shucks!"

"But look here, Stu, his job isn't to teach you games, you know." The word "Jesuit" was unfortunate; after all, Worthington had his good points, and it was manifestly unwise to encourage boyish prejudices. "He's supposed to teach you things you don't know, not compete with you in sports. It seems to me he's a very good sort of teacher in his way. He takes a great deal of interest in you, and you mustn't condemn him just because he can't throw a baseball as well as you. Does he make the work interesting?"

"Why—sort of—sometimes he does. Not Latin, but I guess nobody *could* make that old stuff interesting. He talks pretty well, though, about books and things—and I like some of it all right. But, Dad, that's all he ever thinks of!"

"Yes, but don't you see, Stu?—that's his job. Just as it's my job to see that the new plant makes money. That's what you want to judge him by—how well he teaches you those things, the Latin and the rest of it; and how well he talks about the books he thinks so much of. I don't want to force him on you if you absolutely can't stand him, but you must give him a fair chance, you know." The boy's earnest face was fixed on the ground, his chin resting in his hands. "Learn not to

judge people hastily, my boy—take the time to see what they can do, and what they are really like inside, before you make up your mind. They may not care for the things you like, but if they amount to much they value other things that are good—just as good as yours, perhaps, though you may not think so at the time. It's the good they get out of *their* things which really counts, not the things themselves." He paused, dissatisfied with his own expression of an idea which suddenly seemed too vast to be conveyed by mere speech. "I haven't put it very well, Stu—what I mean is tolerance, and yet it's bigger, too. It's not only letting people alone with what they like and believe and want to do; but it's trying to *like* them better for the very reason that they are different—that they do care for things which mean nothing to us—appreciating them just for what they are. That's it—appreciation. When you've got that, when you're able to appraise and value and enjoy all sorts of things and all kinds of people—I mean—well, get the picture, somehow, of life as a whole, aside from the intrinsic worth of the separate little things that compose it, why then you've got an education."

He was astonished at the way the thing had shaped itself; but a glance at Stuart's perplexed countenance left him dubious. Pshaw, that was preaching—above the boy's head. Yet the subject lay too close to his heart to abandon. Youth was always so intolerant—and with Augusta as his mother . . .

"I don't mean education in the ordinary sense, Stu, but the sort of education that lasts through life. Many people never learn appreciation of the kind I mean, though they've learned to be wonderful athletes or accumulated a great deal of knowledge. You may not understand what I'm driving at very well now, but it will come to you as you grow older. Be charitable toward people—don't take a dislike to any one because of any little peculiarities, or because they can't do what you do; but try to appreciate them for their own sakes. If they don't

come up to your idea of decency—if they cheat, or lie, or are low-down—that's another thing, of course; dislike them as much as you please. But when they are trying to help you, as Mr. Worthington is, then meet them halfway. And remember this, Stu—Worthington doesn't teach you, he just tries to show you the best way to learn things yourself. It's all up to you, you know."

"I ought to like Gobie Wilkinson better, too, I suppose," Stuart remarked gloomily, after a pause.

"Why? What's the matter between you and Gobie?"

"Oh, I don't know. I'm always hearing from Mother how wonderful he is—how he does this, and I don't; or he doesn't do that, and I do. I just get so sick of him, Dad."

"Isn't it because you don't really know each other?"

"Oh, I know him all right."

Both were silent for a time; Maynard comprehending, yet with a little ache in his heart as he thought of the other boy. And Enid, whom he had avoided so carefully all these years—how she had changed, he thought, since that summer; a little faded, withered even, when he had last seen her; grown prim and intolerant as she got older, her name a byword for narrow devotion to her children and to church activities. A Providence, sometimes, in life—in his own life. . . .

"Let's walk, Dad. I'm cold."

Maynard shook himself; they rose and started on. Stuart was speaking slowly and thoughtfully: "I'll try to like old Worthy better—and I'll work harder at everything. Do you want me to stay home next year, Dad?"

It was hard not to say yes; after all, the boy got certain advantages at home, and he would still be very young after another year. . . .

"Not if you want to go away. Of course, your mother and I love to have you at home, but I want you to live with other boys and I believe in your going away to school."

Stuart looked happy. "I've decided on Andover, Dad."

"All right, Andover it shall be—and next fall. I'm a little afraid your mother will be disappointed, though, Stu."

"I know—she wants me to stay." A disturbing ethical question suddenly presented itself to the boy, which he pondered a little in silence. If he left his mother out of the present discussion, the issue, he realized, would be squarely drawn; with the probability that his own indicated preference would prevail. But should he disregard his mother's wish, appear callous to it, even before the sympathetic presence of his father? He asked abruptly: "Dad, if Mother says I've got to stay home and have Mr. Worthington next year, ought I to stay to please her?"

"No! If you want to go away, Stuart, you shall."

"Thanks, Dad." After a pause: "It's not that I don't like it at home—I'll miss everything a lot if I go away to school. But nearly everyone I know's away, except a few boys like Freddie Forbes who are poor and have to stay at home and go to high school. I don't see much of them, either."

"Because they're poor?"

"No—o." It was Stuart's turn to grope for expression. "Mother says they're nobodies, but I like some of them all right. The ones I like best, though, never come round much any more. Like Freddie, for instance. He's always interested in some new thing at school, and he goes with a different crowd now. Then there's others that keep wanting me to do things with 'em, and they're always making a big fuss about something I've got. They want to know how much my bike cost and will I take them for a ride in Grandpa's limousine, and why don't I do this or that. I don't think much of their style."

"Quite right, Stu. Don't bother with people who seem more interested in the things you've got than they do in you." He was a little startled to recognize the expression "think much of their style"; years ago it had been one of his own. But the boy, his reserve abandoned in this new intimacy, gave him no chance now for leisurely reflection.

"Dad, I'd like to ask you something."

"Well?"

"You and Mother don't agree much, do you?"

Maynard squirmed under the sudden sharp scrutiny of those quizzical gray eyes. So the boy had been observing, had noticed little things in spite of all their conscientious efforts to preserve appearances. Uneasily he began: "Why, we don't disagree, Stuart——"

But the eyes met his again, skeptically; it wouldn't do to lie. "No two people ever agree on everything, Stu, of course. Especially when they've been brought up differently, as your mother and I were. She has her own views, and on some subjects they differ from mine, as you may have noticed. But that never keeps two people from getting along, if they just learn to give and take." He could not help smiling at his own *if*. "Life's pretty much all give and take, Stu. Someone discovered that before I did, of course, but it's a good thing to remember. This superman and 'will to power' business is all high-sounding bunk. No one ever gets his own way more than about half the time in this world."

They had reached the clubhouse; there was time for a leisurely warming at the big wood fire in the hall before they started back. Saying little, they sauntered about the empty room, each busy with his own thoughts. A quiet elation ran through the boy's mind as he recalled the little incidents of the walk: his father's promise about the school, the feeling of friendliness and quiet understanding in all that his father had said. Everything was going to turn out well now; life was exquisite, it was delightful, wonderful, to be growing up to it like this; and . . . his father was such a peach.

Maynard kept debating: had he done very wrong to bring the boy with him, behind Augusta's back? He had lied before Stuart, the boy was certainly nobody's fool; it was tantamount to teaching him to deceive his mother. And what about this engagement Stuart had so glibly mentioned before they had

left? "I'm afraid you won't have much time to do algebra with Paul," he intimated suddenly. "It's after twelve now."

"Shucks, Dad! that can wait." Stuart coloured slightly and looked at the floor.

Maynard's searching gaze broke into a smile. "When we get back, Stu, we'll both of us make full confession—eh? Tell your mother where we've been. That's the best way."

The boy glanced at him quickly. Now wasn't that just like his father, always fearlessly honourable? He felt a sudden twinge of conscience at his share in the deceit. Why couldn't he be more like his father and less inclined to petty unrighteousness? Father and son returned in a solemn, joyless mood of earnest resolution.

But at dinner, facing Augusta and old Moldenhauer, Maynard decided not to say anything about the morning until he could speak with his wife privately. There would be a row, no doubt, especially if he persisted in his intention of keeping Stuart from Sunday-school and taking another excursion next week. And after Stuart's questions it seemed particularly unwise to make the boy witness what would probably be an acrimonious quarrel.

The day wore on and still Maynard said nothing. The danger to the boy's morals of continuing in the deception diminished in retrospect; after all, it wasn't a serious matter; and it would be a pity to have no more Sunday mornings like this one, so frank and with such spontaneous mutual sympathy. The boy would be away next year—there was but little time left to him. . . . That night he turned it all over in his mind, lying awake a long while; and the loneliness of what his life would be with Stuart gone haunted and worried him in the dark like a shapeless evil spectre, which only grew more menacing at the remembrance of the day.

CHAPTER VIII

TWILIGHT

TOWARD the end of February of that year old Moldenhauer suffered a stroke.

In spite of his declining health, he still kept solitary state in his big house at the other end of town; a man whose body had worn out though he was not much over seventy; whose orderly mind still possessed that hard shrewdness and foresight which had served him so well, and fiercely resented the weakness of the flesh, when it was not too tired to care. Surrounded by a buxom German housekeeper, a secretary, and, more influential than all the others put together, a shrivelled and querulous old German cook who had been with his wife fifteen years before the latter's death, old Moldenhauer had resisted all of Augusta's proposals that he live with her and Maynard. No, he was more comfortable at home; he had lived there too long to change. "Ach, no, Augusta," he would say, "you cannot teach an old dog new tricks, and you haven't a cook like Annchen." And a very old dog he looked, with his deep-sunken red old eyes, over which a film had come, his droopy white moustache, and slow, stooping walk—a walk as majestic as an aged St. Bernard's.

After the stroke Augusta redoubled her efforts to move him. She stormed, threatened, pleaded. Old Moldenhauer was obdurate; he did not move.

Maynard referred to this contest as proof that when an irresistible force met an immovable body the latter always won.

Old Moldenhauer had three interests left in life—music, the

Republican Party, and his grandson. He never tired bewailing the desertion, by the Irish and many of the German-Americans, of the Grand Old Party; it was a perpetual grievance against the universe. There was just one Grand Army of the Republic, there was just one political faith. Careful in his personal expenditures, he was ungrudging when asked for a political contribution; then there were two Open Sesames—"Save Ohio from the Drys," and "Save the Country from the Democrats." Old Moldenhauer had given small fortunes toward the happy consummation of both slogans.

Since his retirement, music had come to be the great solace against the lonely, melancholy knowledge that his body had unfairly tricked him; music, and the comfort and peace of having Stuart near him. Had Augusta been more of a Talleyrand and less of a Bismarck in her family diplomacy, she might have made subtle use of Stuart and of her piano to bring the old man under her roof. But her father continued to come over when he felt well enough, and when he didn't Augusta and the boy went to him. Sunk in a big armchair in a darkened corner of the room, his eyes closed, his body motionless as death, old Moldenhauer would listen to Augusta's playing hour after hour. He never permitted her to stop before a quarter of ten—the hour at which he had retired, with only occasional exceptions, every night during the last thirty years. Wagner was for him the only music in the world; it affected him profoundly, he did not dare sit in the light while his daughter played the *Liebesmotif* from "Tristan" or the "Pilgrims' Chorus," for he had to grip his chair and sometimes wipe the hot tears from his foolish old eyes. After these emotional crises he was always unusually gruff and taciturn; and Augusta, failing to penetrate the none-too-perfect mask, complained that "Pappa's always cross after Wagner."

Stuart, too, played for his grandfather, but only rarely and that the old man might determine whether he were making progress. Always nervous in these ordeals, the boy played

atrociously, and old Moldenhauer would take him severely to task, delivering long scoldings about the boy's opportunities and shameful lack of industry. Why, it was "*criminal*" not to play better when they gave him everything! The boy must work—that was the trouble with the country nowadays, nobody worked any more as they used to when he was young. Back in the Old Country they still knew how to work, and they were getting ahead! The Drys, the Democrats, and the Labour Unions were ruining America.

"But, Grandpa," Stuart would slyly object, "Roosevelt's a good man, isn't he?"

"Roosevelt?—Roosevelt, ach, yes!"—and old Moldenhauer would flounder for a moment, like a horse pulled up suddenly and turned about; the abrupt transition from gloom to approval was at first difficult. Then he would proceed to develop his favourite thesis that Roosevelt was the greatest man since General Grant, and Stuart knew the storm was over.

Old Moldenhauer always kept a new five-dollar gold-piece in his purse, and after one of these tirades had ended, and when Stuart was about to leave, his heart would soften at the sight of his grandson—he was a mighty good boy—and the gold-piece would be slipped into Stuart's hopeful palm. But he never allowed himself this indulgence more than once a week, let his heart do its worst. Five dollars was a lot of money for a boy, and he didn't believe in spoiling children.

The stroke had left the old man with one side partially paralyzed, and he went out but seldom. It became a duty of Stuart's to take frequent dinners and spend the evenings at his grandfather's. Sometimes Augusta came with him and played, and once a week at least, sometimes oftener, Maynard joined them in a family dinner. But this was a matter of old Moldenhauer's whim, and, tsar-like, the old autocrat insisted on the heir-apparent coming alone more often than not. He could not quite forgive Augusta her last and most persistent effort to make him give up his own home, and a breach developed between

them. Ach! she was stubborn, Augusta! She had not been like that as a girl, something had gotten into her. It never occurred to him that Stuart had usurped his daughter's place in his heart. He had always wanted a son, and now in his old age he could give in to Stuart; but to his daughter, no longer. In a mood of petulant revolt he bought a Victrola: it was a wretched thing, but at least they had some fair Wagner records; and the boy could "run" it for him. Then Augusta would come in unexpectedly, with her way of calmly taking things for granted; and old Moldenhauer would wait, too proud to ask her to play, and concealing his satisfaction when she at length went to the Steinway Grand. Maynard, with his shrewd insight into character, kept urging his wife to make peace with her father—the piano was the way—and Augusta finally listened to his counsel. She had secretly become alarmed, for in her way she loved the old man—and there was always the will.

Stuart went through the long lonely evenings with his grandfather dutifully and a little miserably. The big Benz limousine would come for him at five; in lordly state he would be conducted and received, the servants bowing and scraping like European servants, the secretary meeting him unctuously at the porte-cochère and leading him into the august presence. Sometimes the hour before dinner would be spent in a discussion of politics; again it would be a solemn catechism of the boy's day—above all his studies. How was he getting along in mathematics? *Hat er heute mit seinem Lehrer etwas auf Deutsch gelesen? Er koennte noch nicht franzoezisch gut sprechen? Muesst studieren!*

Old Moldenhauer had discovered that Stuart read tolerably well, and if the evening paper were late in coming, or if the old man felt too tired to read himself, the boy was employed in conveying the day's intelligence to him. These readings tried Stuart's patience sorely. His grandfather was interested only in the Stock Market and the political and business news; even crimes of front-page magnitude had to be passed by, and the

comics and sport pages, the latter with their accounts of spring training and "advance dope," beckoned to the boy in vain.

One afternoon late in March, when the weather had softened in a wash of brilliant warm sunlight and premature buds were touching their dark bare branches with a virginal green, Stuart found his grandfather more tired and inert than usual. He was in the upstairs "den"—a room furnished and decorated after the best traditions of the Rathskeller style, with fumed oak panelling and stained-glass windows in which the German eagle figured with Martin Luthers drinking from foaming steins—a room which had haunted Stuart when he was a small boy and still inspired him with a certain awe. A heavy oak morris chair had been placed against the couch and filled with pillows; in this old Moldenhauer reclined, his eyes half closed, staring through an open window at the awakening green of the trees. Several books and a large meerschaum pipe had fallen to the floor, the latter scattering its cold ashes on the rug; the secretary brushed them up methodically, asked if he could do anything, and left the room.

Old Moldenhauer hardly turned his head, but his voice was unusually gentle as he greeted the boy, and he took Stuart's hand in his own rough hairy old hand, its back knotted with blue veins, a little tremulously.

"Aren't you feeling well, Grandpa?" the boy asked.

"I'm very tired to-day, Stuart. Sit down, my boy."

Stuart took a chair near the table, his eye straying longingly toward an illustrated magazine; there was silence for some time.

"Play something," the grandfather suddenly directed. "There's a new record there, 'Else's Traum'—just came. Play it for me."

For perhaps half an hour Stuart played the Victrola, running through the Wagner records, following their order in the cabinet album; the old man listening with closed eyes and speaking only to request an occasional encore of a favourite. At length they came to Siegfried's love song from "Die Walkuere"; its

passionate lyrical freshness filled the room and floated out on the late afternoon sunshine. As the last note died away a robin sang full-throated outside the window; then another, and another; and for a moment it seemed as if the spirit of spring, like the princess sleeping in enchantment, had been magically awakened by Siegfried's song.

"Open all the windows, Stuart, please. It's very hot in here." Something in his voice caused the boy to look around. Tears were streaming from old Moldenhauer's eyes.

"No more music, my boy." His voice quavered like a child's. "Such a lovely day as it is."

"Shall I read the paper to you, Grandpa?"

"Yes." The old man blew his nose very hard, and Stuart turned away, perceiving that he was ashamed of his emotion.

The boy found the market page and began slowly to recite the table of Wall Street stocks, finishing the tedious reading without comment or interruption from his grandfather. It was unusual for the old man to show so little interest. Turning to the front page Stuart glanced at a large streamer headline: "Mrs. Andrews Indicted for Husband's Murder." Below the type a group of pictures stood out: a young woman, rather pretty, with large round eyes; a weak-looking man; a frame cottage; a little girl; the caption read: "Figures in Chillicothe Tragedy." Tempted to pursue the details of the story, the boy stole a sidelong look at his grandfather, who had stirred slightly in his chair; but the sudden opening of the old man's eyes caused him to start guiltily and look for something of interest which would be less certain to meet with disapproval.

NOT A CANDIDATE
MOULTRIE AVERS

Ex-Governor Out of Politics, He Says

Recalling his grandfather's partisanship for the subject of the headline, Stuart read aloud the entire account of the inter-

view; then hesitated, doubtful of the propriety of continuing with a neighbouring item of the world's news:

HIBERNIAN HEN SITS ON EASTER
EGGS—HATCHES GREEN CHICKENS

SHADES OF SAINT PATRICK!

But as his eye flirted with the fascinating details that followed, old Moldenhauer interrupted in a scarcely audible voice:

"I think you had better call your mother, my boy."

Stuart was a little frightened. "But, Grandpa, she isn't here. I came all alone, you know, as you said."

There was a long pause. "Tell Mr. Jones to 'phone her. She's to come to dinner. And your father, too," the old man directed slowly.

The boy started out, but at the door his grandfather called him back. "It's freezing in here. The windows . . ." His voice trailed off; he was visibly shaking all over.

Stuart hastened to close them, then left to find Jones. The secretary, however, had stepped out for a moment, and remembering that information of the additional guests for dinner might be desired in the kitchen, the boy sought out the housekeeper and gave her the message. As an afterthought he mentioned his grandfather's chill—perhaps they should get the doctor.

But Mrs. Mueller objected. "He's been this way all afternoon, and wouldn't hear of having the doctor when we asked him before. The doctor made him furious the last time he came. And when he gets upset it makes him worse, and he can't eat," she added reflectively. Together they returned to the den, the housekeeper still voluble on the subject of the old man's aversion to physicians. She would just get him a blanket and a little whisky; he would be all right. . . .

Old Moldenhauer did not look up as they entered, but at the suggestion of whisky he shook his head. Mrs. Mueller bustled

out of the room and brought back a light camel's-hair blanket; and without risking a second refusal, this time she gently covered the old man.

"Such a lovely day. But cold . . ." old Moldenhauer murmured very low.

The housekeeper left, quietly closing the door after her.

The old man's speech was thick, drowsy: "*Kennst du das Land* . . ."

"Do you want me to read the paper any more, Grandpa?" Stuart asked.

"*Im Sonnenschein die Goldorangen gluehn* . . ." The words were only a gruff whisper.

Awed and a little embarrassed, the boy sat motionless on the floor. The quiet of the room seemed to deepen, become more intense; the ticking of the brass ship's clock on the mantel accentuated it, dividing it into small, oppressive segments of suspense; the light that came through the stained-glass windows softened and grew faintly mellow as the sun went down. Glancing at his grandfather, Stuart could perceive the blanket stirring, almost imperceptibly, over the slow breathing of the old man.

His eye strayed to the newspaper on the floor; it rustled like a thing alive as he pulled it toward him, and his pulses leapt apprehensively; but his grandfather had not noticed. He began to read the story of Mrs. Andrews.

Following the brief announcement of the indictment, the "Chillicothe Tragedy" was reviewed at some length, that readers might recall its sensational details. A Mrs. Florence Andrews, a pretty woman of thirty, had shot her husband on the night of March 3rd. There had been screams from the little house, and the neighbours had found the mother, herself composed, trying to comfort the hysterical child. In the adjoining bedroom of the child chairs had been overturned, a pitcher broken; the body of the husband lay against the bed. Unflinchingly, and with a proud, defiant fortitude, his wife had told her story and described what had taken place.

Andrews had come home drunk—he had been drinking a great deal lately—and with obscene imprecations had staved in the door of her locked bedroom. Courageously she had faced him. He had abused her violently, making dreadful accusations about the child. He had always been insanely jealous; this was not the first time she had suffered. In vain she had sought to quiet him. Finally Andrews had pulled out a revolver and rushed toward the room where the little girl was sleeping.

Beside herself, she had run after him; they had struggled in the bedroom; the child, only half awake, had sprung up in pitiful terror and alarm. Then, as Mrs. Andrews tried to get the revolver away from her husband, it had gone off. She saw the child fall back—madness had seized her. She had wrenched the gun away and shot, again and again. . . .

The little town had been divided into two bitterly opposing factions by the tragedy. The larger sympathized with Florence Andrews; but the dead man came of a good family, whose word carried weight in the community. The mother-in-law had headed a party of his friends who clamoured for the case to be brought to trial. With roundabout phrases, with many "it is affirmed's" and "it is alleged's," the newspaper account insinuated that there might be another side to the defendant's story, which had induced the prosecutor to act. Mrs. Andrews was a remarkably pretty woman; there had been a certain amount of gossip in the town.

The indictment, however, had stopped at manslaughter, and the defendant was admitted to bail.

The journalistic chefs who served up this appetizing *entremet* to the public were obviously rubbing their hands at the prospect. A crackerjack story—a sensational trial just around the corner. . . .

Stuart finished with a sigh. Why couldn't they let the woman go? From the crude newspaper halftone Mrs. Andrews's big eyes stared out at him, round and softly appealing. . . .

What could they accuse her of that was wrong, and what had the husband meant about the child? What was bail?

Dusk was sweeping up from the corners of the room; it was too dark to read longer without turning on the lights. Stuart hesitated—his grandfather was, to all appearances, asleep. The two motionless figures, the boy and the old man, were like twilight images, enwrapped in a garment of dusk and silence. Tick, tick . . . tick, tick. Ten after six by the clock on the mantel. The garment crept higher, higher, blotting out the familiar objects of the room, interposing a tenuous dimness before the boy's eyes. He called in a low voice:

"Grandpa——"

Tick, tick. Silence and dusk. . . .

"Grandfather!" he cried sharply.

The sound of his own voice suddenly terrified him. Only that rigid form of the old man in the shadows. . . .

In a panic of foreboding Stuart ran out and down the stairs.

CHAPTER IX

ARTHUR TALKS SHOP

I

ARTHUR EVANS had been the victim of a too-thorough reform. To that more than all the other accidents and designs of an inscrutable Providence could he attribute his present place and absorption in Criminal Law, his hardened distrust of all women, and the fact that this afternoon—the day before old Moldenhauer's funeral—found him, at the age of forty, comfortably knotting a sombre black tie between sips of a mint julep in bachelor quarters at the University Club.

Some eight years before, when he was at his most dashing period—just after the war—a classic phrase of Arthur's had passed into the current vocabulary of all the bachelors of the town: "I was never so far from marriage as at the present time—and I'm getting farther every day"—an obvious forerunner of the Coué formula. In the year 1906 Arthur had reached the farthest possible point from matrimonial entanglements; even the wives of his friends had given up planning for him. For all this a Miss Priscilla Stevens of Dayton was, ultimately, more or less responsible.

Arthur had met her at a summer resort in 1902, at a period when his pursuit of the law had waxed somewhat desultory as a result of his more successful pursuit of a woman—her name doesn't matter, since she was always referred to in exactly that way: "a woman"—who was openly known as "fast." The affair had lasted for the better part of a year; and had it not been for an excessive ardour and frankness in Arthur's wooing—for,

also, a callous indifference of both parties to the feelings of a sensitive Victorian generation—it might have had no serious consequences. Indeed, it might have passed unnoticed among the multitudinous whisperings which never got beyond the clubs. But Arthur was drinking—drinking to a degree where even the wives of his friends could say, "My dear, he drinks *terribly*"; and with Arthur, discretion and drink were never on speaking terms. Thus it came about that whenever a friend thought well to point out that Arthur Evans drank, someone less well-disposed would add: "And not only that . . ." with a significant inflexion; or, if the ladies were among themselves a further word was whispered: "libertine."

The summer resort to which Arthur repaired that year was a favourite with Columbus people, and Arthur's reputation preceded him, sowing what proved to be a fertile seed. Though Priscilla Stevens was nearer twenty-eight than any other age, though her energies found little time for frivolous dalliance with men between her absorption in tennis and social mission work, she was duly "warned." Within a week of his coming she had decided that Arthur was a fitter subject for uplift than immigrant children; and to the work she brought, besides a furious concentration, an undeniable and athletic loveliness. Arthur gave up drinking—his Dulcinea had been forgotten sometime since. Miss Stevens plighted her troth. Arthur grew daily more sober, more serious-minded, more abject in his devotions. Alas for the mortality of human fascinations! At the end of six months he had become dismally uninteresting to Miss Stevens, whose dream of being a little sister to the poor had never been entirely abjured; and after a series of unpleasant episodes the match was broken off.

But the experience had done something strange to Arthur; he was a changed man. He had got the habit of reform. In vain he tried a few old-fashioned sprees to ease his mind; he could no longer put his heart into dissipation, and abruptly turned to work. With characteristic perverseness, with, moreover, a vast

bitterness against his own class—the "best people"—the comfortable, self-righteous people who produced the Priscilla Stevens type in all its variations—the people who had shaken their heads over him and barely spoken a year before, but were now ready to welcome him back—Arthur was attracted to the Criminal Law. Already disdained by the Profession's better half, it appealed to his imagination as offering a rôle of Champion and Protector of the Oppressed; for all its corruption it was yet instinct with vitality; and fascinating, to his present mood, in its sharp-witted encounters and human contacts. He threw his entire energies into it, made some money and a good many enemies, and in a surprisingly short time became the only criminal and damage-suit lawyer in Columbus who commanded anything like a general esteem.

Arthur reached the house which had been old Moldenhauer's at dusk, when the arc lamps were beginning to sputter and flare into light down the long vista of the street. A number of carriages and automobiles stood in front; people were still going and coming, and the downstairs rooms of the house were brilliantly illuminated. On the walk he met Governor Bixby and his aide, both of whom he knew slightly; and it surprised him that the old Governor, a democrat whose opinions and policies had been despised by the dead man, should be there. They exchanged a sombre greeting, the Governor remarking on the universal regret at old Moldenhauer's passing—there had been a continuous procession of callers all afternoon. Other people whom Arthur had never seen brushed against him on the porch and in the hall; grizzled old Germans with their families following them in single file, business men, Civil War veterans, ministers, and saloon-keepers thronged in and out, a strange conglomeration of creeds and occupations. Arthur was impressed, a little moved. "Good hearts," he thought, "in greater numbers than one would dream." And pensively he sought out Maynard in the downstairs library of the house.

For the son-in-law it had been a day of almost unmitigated strain. Augusta had received the first shock of her father's death with composure; but to-day she had gone to pieces; for with the fuller realization had come an access of regrets and self-reproaches, many imaginary and undeserved, but none the less bitterly poignant. Stuart had caused his father a greater anxiety, Maynard fearing the effects of this first contact with death upon the boy's high-strung and imaginative temperament. So far, however, Stuart had sustained the ordeal admirably, remaining self-possessed and helping in a hundred small ways until Maynard finally sent him away with Worthington. Arthur, too, had left the big house before noon to keep a pressing appointment; and thus the full burden had fallen upon the older brother's shoulders. Now, at the end of the day, he was nervous and worn; and Arthur hastened to get him out of the house, to the quiet dinner which had been planned at the Broad Street residence.

"It's nearly six, Mardy, and we'd better get along," he reminded him. "I'm awfully sorry I couldn't help you this afternoon."

Maynard finished a list he had been writing at the desk and rose with a tired smile. The affection between the two brothers had grown into a close intimacy and understanding. "Don't worry about that, Art," he said. "Everything is taken care of, and it wasn't at all bad. Only you'll have to cheer them up at dinner—you and Worthington. Get their minds off it as much as you can. I haven't a thought or a scrap of conversation left in me."

"You shouldn't have bothered with any of the callers." He got his brother's hat and coat—it had begun to rain, a chill dark rain which hinted at a possibility of snow. They were walking down the small passageway leading to the side door when the secretary overtook them. "A lady asking if she can see you, Mr. Evans."

Maynard turned. "A caller—now?"

"A Mrs. Wilkinson, sir. Didn't want to disturb you if you were busy, but I thought I'd better tell you."

Arthur touched his brother's arm. "Wouldn't bother now, Mardy, if I were you. Let me see her for you—it's Enid, I suppose. You go straight home and get a little rest before dinner."

"No. I'd better see her." He returned along the corridor, his brother following; but at its end, on the threshold of the hall, hesitated, and then swung about. There was a strange irresolution in his manner. "Art, I can't," he said in a low voice. "I'm dead tired—I don't feel equal—somehow. Explain it to her, won't you, Art? No, tell her I've gone; don't say I couldn't see her. Tell her I, we appreciate it awfully—she's probably come to ask if she might do anything. Oh, I ought—but no, I'll leave it to you, old boy. Think I'll go home, as you suggest, and get a drink."

In astonishment Arthur stared at the back of the figure hastening down the passageway.

II

Augusta came down from her room a moment after Arthur's arrival at the Broad Street house, and simultaneously dinner was announced. The little company, Augusta, Stuart, Mr. Worthington, and the two brothers, filed into the dining room amid a depressing silence, which was only broken, as they took their places, by a banal comment on the weather.

"I do hope"—Augusta began, and then stopped awkwardly, drawing all eyes to her. Her mourning was becoming, setting off her pale gold hair and the natural high colour of her face; but her eyes were red and swollen—"that we won't have snow tomorrow." She got the words out as if in defiance of her hearers. "There's nothing so dreary as a cemetery when it's raining or—the snow is falling."

She bent over her soup, and again silence fell.

Maynard brushed his hand across his forehead and for an

instant rubbed his eyes. Stuart, sitting next to him, noticed the gesture. "Don't you feel well, Dad?" he asked.

"I have a slight headache. Oh, Arthur, by the way——"

"Yes, I started to tell you when I came in," Arthur replied, turning from his brother to Augusta. "Enid Wilkinson called just before I left. She was out of town and just got back this afternoon—wanted to do anything she could to help. Said she had called here, but you were resting and she didn't want to disturb you. She was very anxious to be of service."

"It was sweet of her, but I don't see what she can do," Augusta returned. "I'll see her to-morrow if she comes. Maynard, did you have a hard day?"

"Not so bad. Everything's all taken care of. Oh, did I tell you that Governor Bixby called?"

Augusta finished her soup before replying. "Well, why shouldn't he?" she demanded.

"No reason why he shouldn't. Only that—I thought it was mighty fine of him."

The dinner proceeded to the second course, and Maynard carved the steak.

The tutor, a dapper small young man of twenty-six, with black hair sleekly parted in the middle and tortoise-shell glasses over quick, inquiring eyes, turned respectfully to Maynard's end of the table. His voice was precise and thin.

"Mr. Evans, what do you think of Moultrie's announcement that he won't run for Governor?"

"Hate to see it," answered Maynard; and at the same moment Arthur replied: "It's a shame, but I didn't think——" and broke off abruptly, making a slight grimace at his nephew.

Stuart laughed. "Quick! Join hands and make a wish. You both spoke at once."

"But it's only when you say the same thing at the same time that you're entitled to make the wish, Stuart," Augusta interposed.

It was at this juncture that Arthur, raising his voice, took charge of the conversation with a determined air.

"Speaking of the Governor," he began, "I heard one the other day about him and his son. You know the old Governor never had much education himself, and he's giving his son the best possible——"

"Where's he going?" Stuart interrupted.

"Harvard," and Stuart looked at his plate in disgust, while Mr. Worthington beamed.

"Well, the son's a good husky chap, and he wanted to play football. Mrs. Bixby had seen a game or two out at the State University where they'd carried a few men off the field, and she'd read of other men being killed, so she made up her mind that it was a highly dangerous pastime and not for her Benjamin. Benjamin said that was all nonsense and at Exeter he played on the second team; but when he went on to Harvard his mother got really alarmed. About this time the old Governor, being quite a diplomat, intervened and suggested that perhaps it wouldn't be safe for Ben to play on the Harvard Varsity, where they played a pretty mean brand of football, but it would be all right if he practised on the scrub team——"

Stuart hooted. "Well, I guess it wouldn't be safe for him on the old Harvard team up against Yale."

"Stuart, you're spoiling my story. Of course, Ben's chances of making the Varsity were not especially rosy, seeing that he'd never won his letter in prep. school. But this didn't occur to Mrs. Bixby, and she thought her husband's suggestion excellent. So she sat down and wrote the President of Harvard a nice, long, confidential letter, saying that she didn't mind if her son Benjamin, of the freshman class, played football on the substitute teams, but she was anxious for him to stay off the Varsity for a while—and would President Eliot please see to it personally, as Benjamin was very ambitious, and no one could keep him down when he set his mind on something, and he never had been as strong as she would like to see him; and didn't the

President agree with her that the game should not be attempted by men who weren't extremely robust?"

Augusta joined in the general laugh. "Just like her," she remarked. "I always said she was an imbecile. How did the thing ever get out, Arthur?"

"An unfortunate mistake on the part of the Dean's Office. President Eliot, being a fine gentleman, and wishing to give the wife of a prominent governor some reassuring news, summoned the young man. Unluckily there were two Bixbys in the class, and the wrong one came. He was too paralyzed with awe to open his mouth, and the President had given an ample outline of the situation before he could find words to put him right. But he found enough words afterward, all right."

Mr. Worthington smiled enigmatically in Stuart's direction. When he smiled his underlip was drawn in and his eyes narrowed, giving him a sardonic expression. "What a pity the young man hadn't gone to Yale," he suggested in his blandest manner.

"Why?" demanded Stuart belligerently.

The reply came softly: "I suppose it wouldn't have made any difference there."

III

Dinner came to an end at last, and they found chairs in the living room, where Augusta served the coffee. The simple rite was this evening an ordeal, and her position a refinement of suffering, for she could see the silent piano in the alcove beyond, and look where she might, its polished mass beneath the bright Florentine faïence old Moldenhauer had given her the Christmas before, seemed ever to confront her aching consciousness. The thought of her father and the innumerable evenings she had played for him came to her, for a moment unbearably.

She wiped her eyes furtively with her handkerchief; and the impersonal presence of the tutor, rising to take leave of the company, saved her from breaking down. A warm gratitude

toward the young man for his unwitting support, for his coolness and assurance, deepened to an inflexible resolve that she would not again show weakness before the others. Her old, magnificent will revived within her as Arthur approached, smiling and anxious to cheer her; she returned his smile, and suddenly a store of trivial conversation came with ease.

Alone at the other end of the room, Stuart was gloomily turning over the pages of a book. He was glad that the meal was over, with its melancholy tension and forced pretence of forgetfulness; he felt as if he had escaped from a cage. A furious resentment against the tutor remained pent up within him; at this moment the boy thought he had never hated any one so much in his life. Always smiling that supercilious smile of his, and getting off smart things in that pussycat voice. Stuart longed to say something that would overwhelm the fellow, wring out the corners of that smiling mouth and make him wince with pain. He felt that he would have given his right arm to have thought of some brilliant retort at the table.

His father, coffee-cup in hand, came over and sat down beside him, and Stuart dreaded what he feared was going to be an expression of comfort, or worse—an exhortation not to mind anything Worthington had said. "Stuart, I've been thinking" —here it comes, it's old Worthy, thought the boy—"about our taking a trip. I expect your mother won't want to stay here after this, and—as a matter of fact, we all ought to get away. I've always wanted to go around the world—how does the idea strike you?"

Taken by surprise, Stuart could only stammer: "Why—why —Dad, it would be great, if——"

"If what?"

"If I could go along." He smiled shyly at his father.

"Of course you'd go along. That's the main part of it. What do you suppose I thought of it for if you weren't going with us? Naturally, you'd have to keep up your studies, though—we'd be gone a long time, and it wouldn't do for you to

lose any ground after all the fine progress you've made. But that part of it could be arranged easily."

"You mean by taking Worthington?" The boy's voice had an agonizing note.

"Well—someone at least in that capacity." He suddenly laid his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Still smarting a little, eh? Don't mind a little thing like that—it's not worth it. We'll get the better of him next time. Neither you nor I felt very bright or witty to-night, and he had the advantage of us. But we'll show him, won't we? And now what do you think of the idea of the trip?"

"It would be wonderful," Stuart answered slowly, "if he didn't go along." The thought of giving up prep. school for another year brought a sudden pang, but at the sight of his father's enthusiastic face his heart misgave him and he said nothing.

Maynard had risen and faced the others, his headache dissolved in the glow of the moment. Eagerly he outlined his idea . . . "We'd leave just as soon as things get straightened around. We could make up a party—get some congenial friends, and if possible a friend of Stuart's. And you, Art, would forget the law for a while and go, too. You and I both need a good rest. There's no reason why we shouldn't work less and play a little more."

Augusta was silent, absently fingering her necklace and staring at the dying embers of the wood fire.

"I think it would be a wonderful thing for all of you," Arthur submitted. "But you'd have to leave me out of it, Mardy. I've got a big case that's just starting, and I can't just blissfully 'forget the law' as you suggest."

Augusta turned slowly to her husband. "I'd rather not think about it or try to plan to-night, Maynard," she said, "we can talk it over later. Do you mind?"

"Of course not, my dear. It can certainly wait. I just mentioned it because—it suddenly came to me." A wave of

compassion, of tenderness toward his wife such as he had not known in years swept over him, and he gently patted her hand. She smiled at him, but drew her hand away quickly. "Stuart, I'd like to speak to you a minute, dear," she said.

The boy came across the room. "I want you to come to my room to-night before you go to bed, Stuart. . . ."

Maynard sauntered over to his brother, who was glancing at the evening paper. "What's the new case, Art, that's so important? Anything sensational?"

"Rather—nothing less than the Andrews case. That's what my appointment to-day turned out to be. I was tickled to death; an old country lawyer called me in."

"Good for you! What's the woman like, anyway?"

"Well—she's quite handsome—the newspapers haven't overstated things there. Red-headed—oh, *very* red-headed. And quite charming, though she's very nervous. It's not to be wondered at, for she's evidently suffered like the devil. Impressed me as being absolutely on the level."

Augusta looked up. "What's the Andrews case, Arthur?"

"Why, they've got a poor little woman from Chillicothe indicted for her husband's murder. The husband was worthless, a drunkard and a jealous beast. They had one child, a little girl of six. One night Andrews came home and—— Hello, what do you suppose—I wonder what's struck Stuart? Not like him to go out suddenly like that. Oh, Stu——"

But the boy was already stumbling up the stairs, blinded with sudden inexplicable tears and the vision of that silent room with the old man motionless in his chair.

CHAPTER X

ARTHUR TALKS MORE SHOP

I

HAD any one suggested to Maynard that after sixteen years of marriage he did not truly understand his wife, he would have been neither indignant nor skeptical; he would probably have acknowledged that it was so. Certainly he had always recognized, as a pertinent fact of his existence, an unpredictable quality in Augusta. Yet he was scarcely prepared for its latest manifestation the week after old Moldenhauer's death.

The idea of foreign travel, which he was confident would meet his wife's approval, was summarily rejected, and in its stead she announced her intention of carrying out a long-cherished ambition of building a new house in the country, an estate befitting the wealth and dignity of old Moldenhauer's heirs. The Broad Street house, endeared to her through its associations with her father, which had been home to all of them and especially to the boy, was still imposing among the more pretentious houses of the town. Time had dealt kindly with its Teutonic exterior, hiding brick and masonry with luxuriant shrubbery and vines; inside it was comfortable, even beautiful, with the homelike quality of long-continued usage; and Maynard, its ancient critic, had grown fond of it with the years. But Augusta was a woman of peculiar reflexes. That which reminded her of her father earned no right to preservation thereby; she preferred to leave behind what she could not change. Moreover, the fact that her husband seemed now to have abandoned his old desire for a country place gave the project an additional appeal.

But by far the most cogent reason for building lay in that perfection of civilized instincts, the competitive. Among the older and prouder families of the town, only a few had continued to look askance at the Moldenhauer money and to patronize Augusta; but though small in numbers, the faction of social bitter-enders was ably led, and had long been a thorn in Augusta's flesh. Mrs. Batterson-Smith was the leader, and the chief items of her ability consisted of an implacable dislike for Augusta and a considerable fortune. The former was of course reciprocated; but of the latter, the sinews of war, Mrs. Batterson-Smith had long made prodigal and effective use. Her dinners and entertainments were lavishly and beautifully given, her taste was irreproachable and alas! too often the subject of odious comparisons; and she had undeniably increased her prestige recently by occupying the smartest and (it was whispered) the costliest house in town.

Augusta would have been less than human if she had not looked forward to the publication of old Moldenhauer's will as a personal triumph prefacing a campaign of offensive warfare. In the future, she told Maynard, she meant to take a more active part in social affairs, and while little could be done during the time they were in mourning she intended to do that little by building a house of which they might be proud. For years she had not spent a summer in Columbus; and because she was sick of travel, because, moreover, it was time that Stuart got better acquainted with the boys and girls of his own age, she had decided to get the house under way immediately and remain in town until August at least. Maynard, who appeared to have set his heart on a trip, might find consolation in the opportunity of presenting his ideas of what such a house should be. Since in the past he had criticized the Broad Street house she was prepared to give him a loose rein now; provided, of course, his ideas did not conflict with hers; and in case of disagreement (which Maynard privately thought not unlikely) the architects would constitute a court of appeal.

This much having been decided the evening after the funeral, Augusta was ready to hear old Moldenhauer's last word on the disposition of the Moldenhauer property. On the day following, with only Augusta and her son and husband present, the will was read. It far exceeded her expectations.

A trust estate which Maynard estimated at nearly six millions was created, from which she and her husband were to have the full income, with the stipulation that they continued as man and wife, until Stuart's coming of age; after which they were to have a life income of two hundred thousand a year; and the boy was to come into the principal in 1917, when he would be twenty-five. In case of a separation, Augusta's income would be cut to fifty thousand for life, and Maynard's to twenty-five thousand for a period of ten years, at the end of which it would cease altogether; the remaining unallotted income going to the charitable bequests provided for, until Stuart's coming of age. Arthur Evans was not forgotten; he was to receive one hundred thousand dollars. A sum approximating a million and a half was set aside for charities and benefactions, which included five hundred thousand to a hospital; one hundred thousand to maintain a park given to the city; one hundred thousand to employees of the Brewery; the same divided among old Moldenhauer's servants; one hundred thousand to the Turnverein; one hundred thousand to the Lutheran Church old Moldenhauer never attended; one hundred thousand to public playgrounds; and the balance, about four hundred thousand, toward the "organization and establishment of a symphony orchestra, the purpose being to create a permanent aggregation of the best musicians anywhere available, which may serve this city as similar organizations serve other larger cities by fostering a love of good music among the population." Maynard was named as one of the three executors of the will.

As Mr. Mathewson, the family lawyer, read the document in the downstairs library of old Moldenhauer's house, Maynard studied the faces of his wife and the boy. The clauses in which

the testator had provided against a separation of his daughter and son-in-law were heard in anxious silence; Augusta stared very hard at the wall beyond the lawyer, and Maynard dreaded to look at his son. But Stuart gave no sign of being in any way impressed, and the moment's awkward tension passed when Augusta interrupted the reading to draw the boy to her, embracing him and exclaiming: "Do you understand it, Stuart? It means you're to have it all when you're a man."

"But I don't want it all, Mother," he replied. "I'd rather have you and Dad have it"; and a little later, when the lawyer announced the bequest to Arthur Evans, added: "I'm glad about Uncle Arthur."

They were all glad, as people not infrequently are at learning of an inheritance larger than they had dreamed could come to them. Augusta, already seeing the newspaper headlines in her mind's eye, was delighted with the charitable provisions, which she knew would meet unqualified approbation; and large as their total was, thank Heaven there was more than enough left over for them all.

The little ceremony was finished by eleven-thirty. Maynard's first thought on leaving his wife and son was of Arthur, and he hastened downtown to the latter's office, to be the first bearer of the news. Arthur had 'phoned his inability to be present at the house, owing to an important engagement; and his brother was accordingly not surprised when, arriving before the low railing behind which Arthur's stenographer kept watch over the door, he was requested to wait. He took the morning paper and sat down beside the door leading to Arthur's inner sanctum.

A faint blur of conversation came to him, the words inaudible; but now and then, between Arthur's distinct, low-pitched utterance, he could distinguish the bell-like cadence of a woman's voice. For a while he listened; then, repressing his curiosity, turned to the reading of his paper. The voices presently grow-

ing louder again distracted him, and he discreetly scrutinized the door. There was a step, a sudden click of the knob; and a woman in black, her back turned toward him, paused on the threshold.

She was of medium stature, her lithe, finely tapering body held gracefully erect. In an instant she faced about with a nervous quickness and stepped into the outer office. Maynard saw beneath an unobtrusive black hat a flash of flaming red hair, and set in a small face, large brown eyes which glanced at him with a frank, childlike expression. He had an instantaneous impression of vividness, of some indefinable, arresting quality of personality which seemed to charge the little room with a dynamic and dramatic sense of colour. His paper fell to the floor, he rose awkwardly with his eyes still held by her face.

Arthur had come out, quiet and professional and composed. He did not notice Maynard, but addressed the woman: "Of course, there's no hurry about the little girl. Bring her in when she's feeling better, as soon as you think it won't upset her——"

"It won't upset her now. She understands everything. Say the middle of the week?" Her speech came in quick little spurts, like a robin's scolding.

"Fine. We'll make it Saturday morning then. Why, hello, Mardy, I never saw you. How long have you been standing there? Mrs. Andrews, this is my brother."

With a smile Mrs. Andrews reached out unexpectedly and shook hands. On closer view Maynard thought her a little disappointing. As she smiled, her lips were full—rather too full—her nose large and sharply aquiline; her big hand, as he grasped it, moist and soft. Yet these were forgotten when he felt, for the briefest of moments, her large brown eyes upon him.

"Have you been waiting long?" Arthur was asking.

"Oh, I'm sorry if I was the cause of your waiting," Mrs. Andrews interposed.

"I arrived just this minute," he answered. Before her cordial smile he followed a sudden impulse: "But I would gladly have waited much longer," he added, "to have been the object of such a charming regret."

She appeared slightly disconcerted; then her smile widened, and she murmured simply: "Thank you." Astonishment showed on Arthur's face; Maynard fancied the stenographer was grinning and regretted the speech; now that it was said it sounded florid and silly. The pause was becoming awkward. He made an effort:

"Mrs. Andrews, I wonder if you'll mind my saying—that you have everyone's sympathy and best wishes."

"Oh. Thank you so much. You are very kind." He thought he detected a little catch in her voice. "Not everyone has been so—kind."

"But everything's coming out all right, and it will be over soon," Arthur boomed cheerily, and at Mrs. Andrews's faint smile, resumed in a professional tone: "By the way, I don't think I have your brother's address. In case anything should come up——"

"1720 Monument Avenue.—Here, I'll write it down for your stenographer." She appeared somewhat flustered as she bent over a piece of paper. "I'm very glad to have met you"—she nodded to Maynard, thanked her lawyer, and was gone.

Maynard followed his brother into the inner office. "Let's get some lunch, Art," he proposed.

"Well, my gallant——" Arthur chuckled. "She seemed to make an impression, if I'm any judge."

"Oh, don't think—I'm too old for the kind of impression you mean, Art. But she certainly might, on a young chap. I felt awfully sorry for her; never realized how tough it must be on a woman—such a thing as this——"

Arthur looked at his brother intently, then chuckled again. "You'd certainly make an ideal foreman for our jury," he observed.

Not until they were in the elevator did Maynard remember the will.

II

By the time they reached dessert the will had been exhaustively discussed; the dining room was empty; and Arthur was in an expansive mood. He challenged:

"Now, then—what do you want to know about my client? Remembering, of course, that I'm bound by professional etiquette."

"Oh, to hell with etiquette. What I can't see is, what have they got against the woman? I admit I don't know much about the case, as I didn't read much of the sickening stuff in the papers. Of course, she shot her husband; but, my Lord, she certainly had enough cause."

"Sure. According to what she says. But look at it from a purely legal point of view. Don't mistake me—of course I believe absolutely the woman's on the level. But she had no witnesses to the row with her husband and the shooting. The youngster can testify——" He dropped his voice and waited until the waiter, the only other occupant of the room, had left. "Now, don't breathe a word of this. All the youngster knows is that they came into her room making a hell of a noise and that a gun went off. They woke her out of a sound sleep, she was terrified, and after the shot she fainted. That much came out in the inquest, unfortunately. At that it's extremely valuable evidence, provided the child doesn't get scared when they cross-examine her and spoil her story. Well, there's a gap there, not a very big one, to be sure, but enough for a reasonable doubt——"

"Not a reasonable doubt, but a legal doubt."

"All right, have it your own way. Of course, I don't know what evidence was presented to the Grand Jury to get them to return an indictment, but undoubtedly the man's relations made much of the bad feeling that was known to exist between Mrs. Andrews and her husband. We'll have plenty of evidence

to show that he was a drunken brute—why, he was so jealous of her that if she looked at another man he threatened her and heaped the vilest kind of abuse on her. But there again we have to go pretty largely by her story—we have no witness to his threats. And she—well, she's red-headed, and she hated him cordially. She made no secret of hating him. They may be able to introduce some damaging testimony on that score, for she talked pretty freely; and once, she says, even told him she'd kill him if he didn't stop deviling her. The mother-in-law was present during the scene."

"I can't see why they should return an indictment just because the mother-in-law wanted one."

"Well, mind you, Mardy, I'm not defending the indictment. They haven't half a case. This damned smart-aleck prosecutor of a Freeman seems to think the more indictments are returned the more it's to his credit. Anything that gets him into the limelight is jake with him. I think there's no question but that we'll win, hands down. Of course, as I say, they may have some damaging stuff. She evidently bewitched a number of the village Lotharios——"

"Do you think she was ever unfaithful?" Maynard asked quickly.

"You're certainly putting a strain on etiquette, Mardy," Arthur answered with a laugh. "But, no, I don't. I honestly don't, even though I'm a cynical old bachelor who's seen the seamy side pretty damned often. Tell you why—I don't think she ever met any one who tempted her morality—not in Chillicothe. I flatter myself I can tell pretty well when I go into a woman's story as I have hers. She's not strait-laced, but she's not light either; she's the kind that never does that sort of thing halfway. If she'd misconducted herself, she'd have done it flagrantly, thrown all discretion to the winds, done it so defiantly that everyone would have known."

Maynard absently put out his cigarette, crushing the stub against his plate; pulled out his cigar case, passed it to his

brother, chewed the end of a cigar without lighting it, and finally asked slowly:

"What kind of circumstances is she in? Has she enough to pay you a fee and live decently after it's over?"

Arthur shrugged: "She hasn't anything herself, but her father's a small country banker and is fairly comfortable. When she told me that her husband had nothing—he was superintendent of a little pottery, made good money but never saved anything—I was prepared to take the case without remuneration. Then her father came forward and said he was behind her with every cent he had. But here's a funny sidelight on the woman's history. Seems she didn't want to accept any financial help from her family—told me that if I'd help her and trust her until she's able to get a job she'd pay my fee herself. She was very explicit and very much in earnest about it, and she told me why. She ran away from some little coeducational college upstate to marry Andrews, after her father had refused his consent. 'I got myself into it,' she said bitterly, 'and I owe it to them to get out alone. I was too proud ever to divorce him.' That's the sort she is. I tried to tell her that she owed it to the child to let her father help, but she's determined to be independent. *And* she's red-headed."

"What does she plan to do after she's acquitted?"

"Search me. I don't think she knows herself. But I imagine that eventually she and her family will get together all right, for she's really crazy about the child, and she'll find it won't be such a cinch to support herself."

Maynard sat up suddenly. He wondered: "Would Art think it funny if I told him I'd like to help the woman? Art is a cynical cuss; he'd laugh at me, wouldn't believe it if I said I don't want the woman's gratitude. If I could help her anonymously . . . Mustn't forget to make a note of her address—1720 Monument Avenue, she said. Must do that just as soon as I leave Arthur—1–7–2–0 . . ."

The self-deception failed, however. An inherent, introspec-

tive honesty told him, by the time he reached his office, that Mrs. Andrews's gratitude was precisely what he would like to gain, and that the idea of aiding her, detached from all prospect of her gratitude or recognition, lost much of its appeal. Out of the trifling episode of their meeting the image which his mind retained was of her thanking him, smiling and holding out her hand. Anonymous aid? Bah! . . . He plucked out the page of his small pocket notebook, whereon he had written her address, and methodically tore it into minute bits.

CHAPTER XI

CONSEQUENCES OF A CIGARETTE

AS PROMPTNESS of decision should be followed, in any campaign, by swiftness in its execution, and as Augusta possessed an admirable aptitude for both, no time was lost in selecting a site for the house. The region of flat tableland, sparsely wooded, which adjoined the links of the Country Club and lay along the main road extending from Broad Street, was already becoming the new fashionable district for residences that required an ampler setting than the city limits could afford. Its future standing was assured; the Country Club had made tremendous gains in popularity; and the Batterson-Smiths had honoured "Magnolia Heights" by building across the road from the clubhouse magnolias (the only ones in the region) and the gentle rises of the golf course, from which, apparently—all other "heights" having disappeared sometime in the Neo-Pleistocene Period—the district took its name. Beyond the Batterson-Smith estate and on the opposite side of the road Augusta secured a tract of forty acres.

Events thereafter moved swiftly. By the first of May plans for a thirty-room English Tudor house had been submitted by a celebrated Eastern firm of architects; and after a week of discussion, of objections, suggestions, counter-suggestions, insignificant modifications and eloquent persuasions, during which Augusta's desire to expedite matters worked as a harmonizing factor, the plans were approved. Toward the end of the month the ground was cleared and the house actually under way.

As the plans took outline Maynard's satisfaction grew; as the work went forward he became enthusiastic. The summer was

coming on, the dull season at the plant promised to set in earlier than usual; and with the organization of old Moldenhauer s affairs into a trust estate the son-in-law's burden had been considerably lightened. A majority of his evenings went to working out details of design which had been left undetermined in the hasty drawing of the plans; to devising schemes of interior decoration, occasionally helping Stuart with his lessons or consulting with him and Augusta about some feature which he had always dreamed of for his ideal house. The foundation once started, he spent a portion of each day on the ground supervising the work with the architect's representative. To watch the thing grow, little by little, to envisage the whole as it would stand completed, to see the gradual embodiment of his conception into the beginnings of magnificent reality, became his absorbing interest and chief preoccupation.

One afternoon late in May he finished eighteen holes of golf on the neighbouring links and left his foursome to strike across fields for a tour of inspection. It was still early when, after tramping about the house and the strip of second-growth woodland which was to form the northern boundary of the gardens, he came up to his waiting automobile. Nearly two hours remained before dinner—hardly enough to make a return to the club worth while; and the prospect of working on plans, while the sun was still high and birds were darting and singing across the open meadows, repelled him utterly. Augusta he knew was out playing bridge, but it might be that Worthington and the boy were still at the house or near it, perhaps "exercising" in a mild and genteel manner under the tutor's direction. On such a day he could ask nothing better than a long ride with the boy; and the chauffeur turned the car toward home.

But Stuart had gone out some time before with Paul Ransom. His disappointment dulled by an increasing languor, Maynard walked idly about the downstairs of the house. He changed his shoes, which were muddied; he tried to read; the slanting sunshine, falling across the page, blurred the type, and his eyes were

heavy and drowsy. "Spring fever," he murmured, closing the book and laying it aside. With a sudden attempt to overcome his lethargy he got up and strolled about the room; then, recollecting that he was out of tobacco, resolved to kill the remaining time before dinner by riding downtown.

The chauffeur brought the car, moving out of the driver's seat as his master appeared; but Maynard waved him back and got in behind. The effort of driving seemed suddenly difficult and onerous; he was content to sit back languidly and watch the trees and houses slip past down the long level stretch of Broad Street. For that older part of the avenue lying between his home and the State Capitol he felt a proud affection, an intimate sense of being a part of it, belonging to it; every house on either side was almost as familiar as his own. It had never appeared more lovely than to-day, with the houses softened and the tender greens of the new vegetation splashed with light and shadow in the wash of the declining sun. But it was soon past. The traffic thickened; the residences abruptly turned to solid phalanxes of stone. They turned into High Street—a restless, swollen river rushing through the city, spanned like a river by an endless vista of graceful arches;* its street cars following each other in a long procession, like battalions of huge yellow beetles in single file. Each crossing swarmed with black groups of humanity, surging out, receding, waiting, sweeping back and forth; delivery wagons, automobiles, and an occasional cab rattled by, or piled up like driftwood suddenly caught in mid-channel. It was the heart of the city, beating faster at the most congested hour of the day—the homegoing hour for shoppers and the dwellers in offices and stores.

Maynard's large red touring car threaded its way through a line of slower-moving horse-drawn vehicles and drew up to the curb near a corner tobacco shop. He descended from the tonneau and dodged his way across the crowded sidewalk.

*Electric-light arches, a unique feature of the city since replaced by more modern electric standards.—AUTHOR.

When he returned a moment later, he was amused to see a cordon of men and boys drawn admiringly about the automobile. He heard a street urchin shrill noisily: "Gee, some auter! What kind is it?" and feeling a contented glow of opulence, he stepped back against a plate glass window to light a cigarette while the chauffeur cranked the motor.

Someone in the crowd brushed lightly against his elbow and the match went out. He looked up, at the same time reaching for another match. Just beyond him, almost past, so that he caught only a three-quarter view of her profile, he recognized the figure of Mrs. Andrews, hurrying for a street car, with her hand clutching that of a little girl. Impulsively he reached forward and touched her arm with a light movement; she turned her head quickly, as if startled, while he smiled and raised his hat:

"How do you do? I'm not sure you remember me—I'm Arthur Evans's brother."

Her large eyes seemed to dilate, grow more intense, as she stared at him. For a second people jostled against them; then she led the child out of the stream of pedestrians to the comparative quiet of a store front, her head turned sideways toward him, speaking rapidly:

"Yes, indeed. Of course I remember. How are you? You know I was afraid—I hope you'll forgive me—— Once or twice I've been recognized and—and accosted. This is my little girl, Jean—Mr. Evans."

He bowed and smiled to the child, a slender delicate little thing, well-dressed and saucily pretty with large brown eyes like her mother's, a small pug nose, and an alert, questioning expression.

"I'm afraid you'll put me down as an unpleasant person for making you miss your car," he said with a trace of embarrassment. "Can't I redeem myself?"— there was so much noise that he raised his voice, and at the same time she leaned forward to catch his words—"Can't I make amends by taking you home? I have my car here. I would be very happy——"

"Oh, no—oh!—I'm afraid——Don't think I don't appreciate your kindness, but"—her face wore a look of trouble and uncertainty—"you don't understand. I wouldn't dare. Just now——"

"Of course——" he began, but the child's voice, high and coaxing, interrupted him:

"Why not, Mamma? Don't let's go in the old street car. Please, Mamma, let's go with him in the auto."

Maynard's eyes met those of Mrs. Andrews, and suddenly both laughed—Mrs. Andrews with an almost hysterical heartiness inclining slightly toward him; Maynard sobering instantly and turning his gaze to the child's astonished face. He was painfully and acutely aware of the closeness of their contact.

"Why not, Mamma?" the child insisted.

"Hush, Jean! Now stop teasing." She, too, was serious now, though she smiled at him. "You've corrupted my child completely." The fact of her closeness still smote his consciousness. "But really, it wouldn't do," she was saying; "thank you just the same. You understand, don't you?"

"Surely. You are quite right, of course. I didn't stop to think," he returned gravely. "Some other time we'll have a ride," he promised the child. "You'll let me take her, won't you?"

"I won't make dangerous promises before her. If she's good——"

"You'll let me go, won't you, Mamma?"

The awkwardness had magically vanished. As they laughed she regarded the child for an instant, tenderly; then to Maynard's surprise, shook hands.

"Good luck to you," he said. "Good-bye, Jean—I'll take you riding some day."

He watched them as they disappeared in the crowd. He saw the aureole brightness of the woman's hair, half hidden beneath her small black hat and veil; he was still conscious of her face, of a softness of contour about the chin that grew more rounded as

she laughed. . . . He got in the motor abstractedly.

The ride back seemed unreal. He watched the same corners, the same trees and houses with unseeing eyes. Once he swore softly under his breath, as he suddenly recalled a fragment from a newspaper account of the Andrews case. "A murderess—that woman," he muttered, and rubbed his tired eyes, as if to rub out the vision of her face. Almost at the next instant he was startled to perceive they had reached the house; and like another vision in its strange momentary detachment from time and tangible reality, he saw his son advancing toward him from the yard.

CHAPTER XII

THE FIRST FATE; THE SPINNING OF THE THREADS

I

TO ALL boys June is ever a notable, a delectable season; a month of liberation and a promise of pleasures to come; and to Stuart, the June of that year was raised in anticipation above all the thirteen previous Junes of his experience. It brought an end to Worthington and a beginning to society of his own age. In spite of mourning, it looked as if this summer, the first he had spent in Columbus, would be the pleasantest and most eventful he had ever known.

The tutor was given two months' vacation with pay; but it was a virtual dismissal, since Augusta had permitted her husband to complete arrangements for Stuart's entrance at Andover. A more tender solicitude for the boy's wishes since her father's death, no less than her preoccupation with building plans, was responsible for the concession. Thus the closing and laying away of textbooks acquired an especial, a symbolical significance; it meant the dawn of a new era; and no era, Stuart thought, had ever been ushered in more auspiciously or hailed with greater joy.

Young Henry Dupree came home; Philip Bonant came home; so did Charles and Gobie Wilkinson, and a host of others. There were additional arrivals of less immediate concern to Stuart—the slightly older girls from boarding schools. There was calling—formal in the case of the Wilkinson brothers; of almost diplomatic formality when Patricia Young, aged thirteen and considered by Augusta as "the sweetest child in town," came

with her mother; and calls that were nothing if not informal frequently exchanged with Henry Dupree and Paul Ransom. There were long sessions of slow misery which the society columns referred to as "reunions of the younger school set"—dances and stiff dinner parties which Stuart's mourning forbade him to attend. For the first time the boy discovered a compensation in his grandfather's death; but to Augusta, revelling in social prospects for her son, the present prohibition was vicariously cruel and trying.

After a week of this opening gaiety, certain return calls were declared to be imperative, and Wednesday was mentioned as a tentative date for returning the courtesy of the Wilkinsons. But Wednesday, Stuart pointed out, was the day of the "big game"; a game of transcendent importance which was to inaugurate the local baseball season among the east-end amateurs of his acquaintance. Augusta thought Stuart might leave the game a little early, in time to join her at the Wilkinsons'. No suggestion could have inspired a greater horror and revulsion; perhaps his mother didn't realize that he was an important member of Paul Ransom's team, that his services as pitcher had not only been volunteered, but *requested*. Augusta relented, dimly apprehending that a considerable honour had been conferred on her son, and that the issue at stake was no trivial affair. The Wilkinson call was deferred until the following day.

Wednesday dawned gloriously fair; all the omens were favourable; and Stuart spent a portion of the morning in diligently applying olive oil to his new four-dollar baseball glove and throwing preliminary "curves" to Henry Dupree. The glove was a thing of beauty and his especial pride—softly flexible but firm, and somewhat redolent after the oil; the exact size and pattern, according to the sporting goods catalogue, of Christy Mathewson's own. Not to be outdone, Henry had brought a new bat, similarly guaranteed to be an authentic replica of the famous Willie Keeler model; the handle of which

was industriously and thoroughly furnished out with tape borrowed from the chauffeur. The greater part of the morning having been consumed in these preparations, Henry adjourned to his own domain for luncheon, while Stuart repaired to his room, practising strange and terrible contortions before his mirror after the manner of Christy Mathewson, or that more picturesque figure, referred to by the sport columns as the "elongated Addie Joss," in the act of "winding up" and hurling balls at unimaginable velocities to batters who swung wildly and in vain.

The butler interrupted, summoning him to lunch; and somewhat shamefaced at being detected by a menial in these private exercises, Stuart descended to the dining room. There the function known as luncheon was disposed of so expeditiously as to bring a protest from his mother, who furnished a further and more vigorous protest when the butler announced the omission of a salad course owing to the dearth of olive oil for a dressing. By one o'clock Stuart had headed his nickel-plated bicycle toward the vacant double lot adjoining the Thurlow residence which was to be the scene of the game.

Paul Ransom and Henry Dupree were already there, well in advance of the time set for calling the game, and Stuart, after parking his bicycle in the space against the Thurlow fence reserved for players' vehicles, joined them in a preliminary batting practice and "warming up." Their triumvirate was the vital nucleus of the team known as the "Broadway Blues" (the origin of the name being uncertain, as most of its members neither sported the team colour nor lived on Broad Street). Forty minutes later—the interval occupied with the arrival of Phil Bonant's team, the telling-off of extra players, and bitter internecine warfare over the batting order—Stuart went into the box to pitch the first official ball of the afternoon.

The sky, so cloudlessly blue a little while before, had become overcast and threatening. Before its ominous hint of intervention the boys wasted no more time, playing with the grim

seriousness, between shrill outbursts of fanatical enthusiasm, proper to the gravity of the issue and the dignity of young men who had put away childish things. As he pitched, during the complicated business of winding up, Stuart glanced occasionally at the sky. Unfortunately, at the end of the third inning, when the score stood 5–5 and there were runners on first and second with two out, he protracted one of these celestial inquiries a moment too long; his arm, carried forward in the wild release of the wind-up, loosed the ball before his eye had descended to the mundane level of the batter; and the ball soared wildly toward the Thurlow fence. To the gleeful and derisive chorus of "Throw it away!" the Bonant runners dashed for home with the runs which would break the tie.

In the ensuing excitement and confusion, Stuart only dimly realized that the ball was being returned long before Henry's flying legs could be expected to reach it; that it was coming swiftly toward him, in a well-directed throw which fell just short of his feet. Amid a vociferous protest from the Bonant cohorts at this exterior aid, he retrieved it and dashed in time to catch the second runner at the plate. The crisis was averted; the Bonant side had been miraculously retired.

An interval of comparative leisure for the pitcher who had lost control immediately followed; for Stuart gave but brief attention to the furious uproar which surged about the umpire. Curious as to the identity of his *deus ex machina*, he left the field, none too loath to get beyond hearing of sundry insulting allusions to his pitching; and noticing a mass of shrubbery in the angle between the fence and backstop, approached it rapidly.

At the end of the fence and hidden from view of the players stood a tall, slender girl of about fifteen, her bobbed brown hair framing an oval face which was at once pretty and slightly mocking in its expression. She was watching him intently from smiling blue eyes; he recognized her as Helen Thurlow, a former dancing-school acquaintance whom he had always known in a vague and distant way. Abruptly he stepped back, then realiz-

ing that immediate retreat would appear cowardly, greeted her with a stiff "Hello."

"Hello yourself," she returned. "I don't think there are any more balls over here." Her voice broke into a mischievous but friendly laugh, which grated on the boy's irritated sensibilities. He made a mental note that he disliked fresh girls; but the occasion, he decided, called for dignity and a cool politeness. "Much obliged for sending it back," he said, and turned to go.

"It was a rotten throw, but I'll do better next time." She sighed, then calmly smoothed her short skirts and sat down cross-legged on the grass beside the fence.

Stuart hesitated, uncertain how to close the interview in such a manner as to emphasize his self-possession. The throng of boys in the centre of the diamond was breaking up; it seemed undesirable to let his absence be discovered. The girl had ceased to notice him, her face bent forward against a large knot-hole in the fence. "How's the score stand, Stu?" she asked abruptly.

"Six–five. Well, I guess—I'd better be——"

"Yes, you'd better get back," she ended for him, a faint irony in her voice, her eye still glued to the knot-hole. "You bat right after Freddie Forbes, don't you?" The voice assumed a judicial tone. "Not a bad game—so far."

He abruptly started for the batters' bench, walking very fast. "So long," she called pleasantly. He fancied he heard a suppressed, bubbling laugh, but did not deign a reply. On the bench, waiting anxiously while Freddie Forbes tried to solve the mystery of the Bonant pitching, he pondered the conversation darkly in his mind. She was watching them—had been watching all the time! Except for that laugh of hers, she wasn't a bad sort of girl, as girls went; awfully improved, quite grown-up since the dancing-school days. And she threw well—though probably with a wild, awkward sweep, like all girls threw. Stuart wished he had seen the actual delivery, that he might have judged better. Even though she had laughed and been a

bit fresh she seemed well-disposed toward the Blues and toward himself in particular; she had called him "Stu," and at dancing school it had always been a formal "Stuart". . . .

Freddie's bat cracked; a weak pop fly wavered in the air and was caught by the second-baseman; Freddie on his way to first base stopped and emitted a loud, emphatic "Damn it!"

"Shut up, Freddie!" Stuart scowled at the offender while a dozen astonished boys paused to stare at the censor.

Stuart dropped his voice. "Women," he suggested meaningly, with a jerk of his head in the direction of the fence. "Spectators."

Several voices mingled in a jeering chorus.

"Aw, what do I care?"

"Been over to tell the girls about the game!"

"Yay! Stu wants you all to talk in a whisper."

"Oh, fellows, no profanity."

"Don't mind them, Stu, hit it a mile!"

"Give it a ride, Stu!"

"No profanity, fel—lows, no profanity!"

"Did she invite you to have some tea, Stu?"

"Hit it, Stu, hit it!"

Stuart prayed devoutly that he might hit it a mile. He swung viciously, thinking of the face against the knot-hole. He struck out.

There are moments of bitterness in the life of a young ball-player which ordinary humanity bids the reader shall be spared. Stuart, walking with bowed head to his place in the box, not only thoroughly detested a large number of those present; he loathed himself, and tasted in his soul the wormwood of the reformer who has failed. The sky had grown darker, and distant rumblings were heard, drawing ever nearer; a fresh, moist breeze sprang up from nowhere and swept the field. It occurred to him that Helen Thurlow, in her present point of vantage, was decidedly *persona non grata*. For a moment he even wished it would rain.

If anything further were needed to complete his chagrin, it was supplied in the sudden ease with which the Bonant team hit his "curves" to distant corners of the lot. Ted Eaggleson got a two-base hit; a single and a triple followed; Paul Ransom fumbled an easy grounder; Stuart's "support" disintegrated and with it his control over the ball. There was an avalanche of runs for the Bonant team. Then, as the miserable pitcher was about to suffer that crowning humiliation—removal from the box—another avalanche descended. To Stuart it was indeed "the gentle dew from Heaven." The boys broke and ran helter-skelter from the rain-drenched field.

Stuart's first thought was of his nickel-plated bicycle lying unsheltered against the fence. His second was of Helen Thurlow—an encounter with her would be supremely distasteful. But she had probably scurried for the house, and as the other boys were already hurrying with their steeds to nearby trees he lost no time. As he ran toward the sidewalk, pushing the wet bicycle and tenderly covering it with his coat, a figure hailed him from the Thurlow yard.

"Oh, Stuart, bring it inside if you want to!" It was Helen, running toward him, her shining slicker flying above graceful and shapely legs, her wet bobbed locks glistening and streaming in the beating rain.

"Thanks!" he gasped, turning the wheel around. She made a move to help him, but he imperiously waved her aside. "Don't bother—I can manage it," he declared gruffly. She went ahead of him, indicating a closed side porch; and out of sheer bravado he sprang on the bicycle and with one tremendous turn of the pedals surged to the porch, dismounting with a flourish and a long slide of the braked rear wheel. Together they pulled it up to a dry immunity against the porch railing.

"Nice bike you got," she panted. "Shame it had to get so wet. Want a cloth to dry it?"

Still coatless, his wet shirt plastered against his body, Stuart was clumsily wiping the once-shining handle bars with the dis-

carded garment. "Thanks—won't need it," he muttered. "It's all right—be dry in a second." But she had disappeared into the house, and in a moment brought back a large cloth. "My good-ness! That's no way to dry anything," she exclaimed with cool authority, and pushing him aside rubbed the frame and saddle vigorously until a semblance of shine returned. Helpless and subdued Stuart watched the slim rounded arms at work.

"Now, isn't that just like a man?" she queried softly, addressing the bicycle. "Using his coat to cover what was already good and soaked, when it might have been keeping him halfway dry." She laughed the same suppressed and bubbling laugh as before.

Stuart decided that he had been wrong about the laugh; decided, moreover, that Helen Thurlow was not only pretty, but *sensible*. (His vocabulary contained no word of more complete approval.) . . . The bicycle attended to, she conducted him inside, and ignoring his now feeble protests, directed him to stand against the kitchen stove until thoroughly dried. There she left him; and in the unwelcome presence of a coloured cook he took stock of the situation.

The thought that the other boys were waiting under the trees, and when the rain abated would resume the game; that several had perhaps witnessed his desertion to their circean neighbour, weighed heavily upon his spirit; but a scrutiny from the kitchen windows reassured him. The rain was still sweeping down in sheets which partially obscured the field, and the view of a few bedraggled refugees running for better shelter spoke eloquently of the game's end. Torn with regret at the ignominious last inning and a suspicion that he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire, the boy morosely awaited his mentor's return.

The coloured woman, moved to friendliness by his dejected appearance, chuckled softly: "You-all got wet, didn't you?"

Stuart grudgingly admitted the justice of the observation.

"Well, you jes' get good and warm." She pushed a chair

toward him. "Sit down, honey—no reason why you gotta stand up all the time, lookin' so mad like."

Stuart glared. He sat down.

A moment later: "You one of Miss Helen's young men?" Her tone was both wise and ingratiating.

"No!"

The coloured woman chuckled knowingly.

Helen entered, breathless and pink-cheeked. "Excuse me for leaving you so long. Is your—are you fairly dry?" she inquired solicitously.

"Sure. I'm all right." He rose with astonishing alacrity.

"Let's go in the living room then and talk."

In the hall she stopped him, her manner embarrassed and confidential. "I thought perhaps—you would like to—to put on a dry shirt." She coloured, getting the words out quickly. "Dad's bigger than you, but I thought—I got one out for you—if you want to. It's out on his bed. It won't be so *very* much too big, and under your coat——"

Stuart was horror-stricken. "Put on one of your father's shirts? Gosh, Helen, I'm all right, honest I am! Gee whiz, I wouldn't think—— I'm abso-lutely all right!"

"Well—I didn't want you to catch cold." She moved on ahead of him, evidently considering the topic closed.

"Cold? Me? Why, shucks, this isn't anything at all! Abso-lutely, Helen! Why—why, many a time I've been twice as wet as this and played ball all day." He became eloquent at the thought of his disparaged hardihood. "Many a time, Helen!"—they were in the living room—"I never catch cold—at least not this kind of weather. Why, many a time I've been abso-lutely *soaking*—clear through to the skin—and——"

"Do sit down, Stuart," Helen interrupted sweetly. "Mother's out, I guess." After a pause: "Tell me about the game."

"Why—they beat us. 'Course if it hadn't been for the rain——" He made a tragic gesture. "I simply couldn't play to-day."

Helen's voice was honey-sweet. "I thought you played very well, except at the very end. They rattled you with all that yelling."

"Well—*some*. Didn't have my old batting eye, though, either. Only got those two little dinky hits, and that last time the light was something fierce." He brightened with a sudden inspiration. "Did you see the game last week?"

"No. Our school didn't let out till Tuesday."

There was a pause, as Stuart waited for her to ask after further details of last week's game; but apparently it didn't occur to her, and the idea of gratuitously submitting an account of his two home runs and triple smacked of ostentation. It was really too bad she hadn't asked. At length: "Gee, I'll bet you're glad to be out of school. You go to C. S. G., don't you?"

"Yes." She sighed heavily. "It *is* the dum-mest place. I never saw such a place for *con*-stant interference with one's —ah—with one in all my days. And nothing but girls. Girls, girls, girls—all the time just girls." Her arm described a large, inclusive sweep, to indicate a teeming multitude of the preponderant sex. "Honestly, they're so silly! Of course, as Mother says, I *have* an older point of view—you see I've always associated with much older people, having a sister who's going to be married next month—and I'm to be in the wedding. And I suppose it *does* make a difference, doesn't it?—I mean being with older people so much, and all that."

Stuart heartily agreed that it did.

"But I'll never see Priddy's again—*never!* Mother's promised to send me to Miss Spence's next year—that's where Frances went. Frances is my sister—the one that's going to be married, you know."

"How do you mean you're going to be in the wedding?" Stuart asked dubiously.

"As one of the attendants, silly. I have the *love*-liest pale pink crêpe-de-chine frock—but I suppose you're scarcely interested in that, being only a mere man." She laughed de-

liciously. "My goodness, but I'll be glad when it's over. Frances drives me nearly *frantic*—honestly, you'd think it was the only wedding in the world, the way that girl takes on. I must say, matrimony just seems to *ruin* some people's dispositions."

Stuart thought it better not to commit himself. He led the conversation back to schools, on which subject they discoursed for perhaps thirty minutes, discovering an astonishing range of attachments and aversions shared in common. At the gradual revelation that they thought very much alike on a great many things, such as baseball, going away to school, tutors, and Latin, Stuart felt a nascent wonder bordering on awe. He had begun to glow with the pleasant conviction that Helen Thurlow was the nicest girl he had ever known and this business of calling a much underrated affair, when he suddenly noticed a stream of sunlight falling across the floor.

He jumped to his feet, once more the pitching mainstay of a team which smarted under defeat. "Gee, Helen, they'll be coming back! Who'd ever thought the old rain was going to be over so soon?" His face lengthened at the thought of the unreliability of rain. "I'd better get right out there and limber up the old arm a bit."

"But they certainly won't be starting again at this hour," Helen objected; and seeing his stupefaction, added: "It's going on five o'clock."

Consternation filled him; time, the manner of whose passing had been a mystery "many a time" before, had never played him such an amazing trick as this. Only the close examination of the hall clock removed the last vestige of his unbelief. With a sudden shy reserve he accompanied his companion to the porch, wheeled his bicycle down the steps, and surveyed the empty field.

She suggested a return to the living room, but he shook his head in gloomy dissent. "I must get home. Promised my mother I'd be back early," he lied. Before the level gaze of

the girl's blue eyes he sensed an incipient weakness in his being. "Honest," he insisted. "I'd like to stay. It's been lots of fun—Helen—talking and everything. And much obliged for getting that ball I threw away that time."

He was already in the saddle, balancing the wheel with one foot on the steps. "Oh, that wasn't anything," she answered coolly. "I wanted you to win. You must come and see me again." His foot slipped, and the wheel wavered perilously; he recovered it with an awkward grin. "Sure," he said. "You bet—Helen——" The problem of how to say good-bye became a torture.

Helen suddenly raised her hand and loudly snapped her fingers. "I know what! Wait a second, and I'll get my bike and ride part of the way with you." She sped down the steps and toward the rear of the house. He felt a dizziness come over him. In an incredibly short time she flashed around the corner, and pedalling fast, shot by him, her short brown hair streaming behind. "Gee, but you're slow!" she mocked. He gave chase, standing upright on the pedals and straining every muscle. Together they bumped over the curb and raced silently down the long, glistening asphalt street.

The ride was like a heady wine; a strong, sweet wine that left them breathless and disdaining speech. At the end of the block he passed her easily. She smiled into his face as his faster bicycle came abreast, and her cheeks were rosy from exertion and her blue eyes dark with malicious joy. He slowed down, and they kept pace together as far as Broad Street; but at the corner of the thoroughfare she turned away, dipping in a wide, graceful arc like a swallow wheeling, and waving her hand, called good-bye.

"Good-bye, Helen!" he called back. He risked collision with a carriage just ahead to watch her, for a moment, riding slowly down the street. She panted like a wild thing; with one hand she lightly guided the handle bars, with the other brushed her hair and smoothed her reluctant skirts over her knees.

Stuart pedalled deliberately over the remaining distance to the big house. . . .

At dinner he was unusually silent and preoccupied. The game, he acknowledged, had gone badly; when it came to details he replied evasively, and dropped the subject after mention of the rain. As they were leaving the dining room his mother reminded him not to forget their engagement for the following afternoon. "What engagement?" he parried.

"Why, to call on the Wilkinsons. Don't tell me you've forgotten already."

"Oh," he murmured. Augusta had started on her sewing before he again approached her, his manner hesitant but determined.

"Mother, you didn't tell Mrs. Wilkinson we were coming, did you?"

"No, it wasn't necessary. Why?"

"Well, I thought—you see, I did forget about it, sort of. Not absolutely forgot it, because I'm not trying—I mean—I don't want to get out of going," he stammered before Augusta's inquiring scrutiny. "You see I got sort of an engagement that I made a long time ago and forgot all about when I said we could go Thursday. I thought we could go, maybe—I mean—just as well—to the Wilkinsons' another day, because I got to make a call that I promised to make, and it really doesn't make any difference if we don't make the other but put it off, does it? You see——"

"What *are* you talking about? You mean you *want* to make a call?"

"Yes. You see——"

"On whom?"

"Why—it's not exactly a *call* so much—at least. . . . You see, I promised to go see Helen Thurlow. I thought maybe——"

Augusta's sewing fell from her lap with a soft thud. "Well, of all the crazy things I ever heard of!" she declared. She

stared in open incredulity. "You mean the Thurlows on Bryden Road—the Helen Thurlow that used to go to dancing school?" He nodded meekly. "How did you ever——" She suddenly exploded—"Well, I should say not!"

It should be mentioned that Mrs. Thurlow had never commanded Augusta's admiration, much less her liking; and since it is not unusual for a woman's disapproval of a woman to descend upon the latter's children—especially when they are of her own sex—Augusta had come to consider Helen Thurlow as pert, bold, and lacking in maidenly modesty—in short, her mother's own daughter. All this from divers incidents, trifling but to her significant, witnessed during the period of Augusta's chaperonage at the dancing school; from, moreover, certain odds and ends of gossip that had since emanated from observing acquaintances. A great deal of what was in her mind must have stood very legibly upon her face; for the boy knew there was little hope of reversing her sudden and emphatic decision; that in the present case she was an enemy, from whom further questioning would merely bring biting criticism of his friend. And the thought of such criticism suddenly appeared—he knew not why—unbearable.

He turned away slowly, saying nothing. Perhaps his mother, who really hated to hurt the boy even when she held it to be for his good, felt a pang at seeing his dispirited face; perhaps also the look in Maynard's eye as it met hers and he shook his head influenced her more than usual. She equivocated gently: "I don't mean, Stuart, that you can't see her. She's just not quite the type of girl—— Still, I suppose there's no harm in your going if you want to. But I was disappointed that you asked to get out of going to the Wilkinsons', after your solemn promise."

Maynard coughed a fictitious cough and lowered his newspaper. "You aren't planning to stay long at the Wilkinsons', are you?" he inquired.

"We'll have to make it of decent length to have some kind of a visit," his wife replied guardedly.

"Well, what's the matter with Stuart making his call on Miss Thurlow early, and then going to the Wilkinsons'?"

Augusta struck her colours. Maynard, triumphant, struck a match and puffed with a complacent air on a fresh cigar. Stuart threw a look of gratitude, infinitesimally brief, toward his father, who did not see; and shortly after sought out his own room.

Now that it was settled, he was far from happy. To-morrow —to-morrow afternoon—loomed frighteningly near. By bedtime he was miserable with a species of anticipation verging on dread.

II

The clock in the Thurlow hall showed exactly a quarter to three when Stuart passed it on his way to the living room, there to await a coming which the maid had assured him could not be long postponed.

He didn't know whether he was glad or sorry that Helen was out. Now that he had come, after going to all the bother of putting on his best Norfolk suit, it seemed a pity to turn back and face an afternoon of inevitable and appalling boredom at home and at the Wilkinsons'; and the maid had helped him decide by repeating: "Miss Helen will surely be back by three—she promised her mother to be here by that time." At one moment the delay appeared as a welcome respite, at the next as a prolongation of miserable suspense; he hoped she would come, he hoped she wouldn't come, and all the while his brain struggled with the pressing problem of what he would say. Once, hearing a step on the outside walk, he fled as far as a small library adjoining the living room. But it proved a false alarm, and he returned to his chair with the determination to see the thing through—adventure or ordeal—to the bitter end.

His bicycle had been left at the side porch. The simple expedient of proposing a ride occurred to him with the sudden light of inspiration; but he must suggest it casually, keeping

calm, and appearing to have dropped in on the spur of the moment. That was it—be casual. He would have an advantage over her; she would be tremendously surprised at his being there. He fancied her rushing in breathlessly, flinging her hat on the hall rack, and then giving a little exclamation as he came up from behind—"Why, Stuart Evans! I never *dreamed* you were here. How awfully nice of you!" Already he heard her saying it, saw her flushed cheeks and expression of astonishment and unfeigned pleasure. Then he would say: "Well, I was just going by on the old bike, Helen, and I thought maybe you'd like to ride a ways"—and then they might get a butterscotch sundae down at that new place on Eighteenth Street. And, oh, exquisite thought!—he wouldn't have to talk much while they ate; and the sundae—his mouth watered in anticipation—would be a recompense and a fortification against the odious Wilkinson call.

He watched the hall clock anxiously: five minutes had elapsed. He watched it steadily for a long time, and it made no progress at all. He consulted his own watch to determine whether the clock had stopped; but both were still running, and it was still ten minutes to three. He got up and wandered about the room, peeped into the library, where a cat was sleeping on the sofa; went in and stroked the animal furiously until it shook itself and scampered out of the room in panicky resentment. A terrible restlessness possessed him; he felt too light-headed to think any more of what he was to say. His heart suddenly sank to his shoes as he heard the front door open.

It was Helen; there was no doubt that it was Helen; he knew her light step as she approached the living room. He advanced to the curtains which shut off the library, and at the same time her clear voice floated through the room:

"My, but it's dark in this old house! Come on in, Gobie."

Congealed with sudden horror, Stuart stood very still; then cautiously he moved behind the curtains. He heard Gobie's polite, high-pitched voice: "Can't stay but a minute, Helen.

I just wanted to ask you if you'd go to the Youngs' with me to-morrow night. I asked Patricia particularly if I could take you."

"Why, I'd be delighted, Gobie." The sweetness of the voice sounded convincing. "What time will you come?"

"Oh, 'bout seven-thirty."

"Now, don't get up, silly! You don't have to go. Mother just wanted me for a minute—it's something about that old wedding—and I'll be right down."

"Well, all right, Helen—I'll wait for you. Gee, it certainly must be a nuisance to be in a wedding."

"Now, isn't that just like a man?" There was a low, bubbling laugh, followed by a sudden scuffling sound. "Now, Gobie, stop! Don't! Oh, you *awful* boy, *stop!* Oh . . ." The voice grew fainter, drifting from the hall—"I'll be down in a minute."

The coloured cook, for a long time afterward, wondered how it happened that a young gentleman—presumably the same young gentleman she had seen only a minute before going up the walk with Miss Helen—should dash through her kitchen without a single word of greeting or excuse, making for the side door as if he had gone clean out of his head. "Never said a *word*," she recounted later—"jes' scurried fo' the doah as if a ghost was after him. Looked like that same young man was here dryin' hisself yesterday." She chuckled softly. "Guess the missis 'mighty glad she gettin' the older one married off, the way Miss Helen comin' on!"

III

That night Maynard felt very happy. At dinner they had talked of plans for August and the fall; after a month or two at Lake Placid, where they would all escape the August heat of the Middle West, he and Augusta would take the boy to New York for a tour of the shops, and thence to Andover. Stuart had manifested an unexpected delight at the prospect

of getting away; far from objecting to the Adirondacks, as his father feared he might, he had even intimated that the sooner they left the better he would be pleased. And later, when Maynard and his wife were leaving for an evening of bridge at the Ransoms', she had privately confided that the boy had behaved "just beautifully" during every minute of the call.

"It's a great satisfaction to me that I made him go," she said. "He was very quiet and polite, Maynard—I wouldn't have believed it possible he could be so polite. It's really doing him a lot of good, making him get out and see people. Godfrey wasn't there, but Charles came in later, and the two boys seemed to get on very well together. They went off somewhere—Charles wanted to show him something or other. Enid was looking well."

"How about the other call—the one on the little Thurlow girl?" Maynard asked.

"Why, it seems she was out. He didn't say much about it." After a little she added reflectively: "You know, it's a shame that Charles and Godfrey Wilkinson have so little in common. Enid told me that Charles just makes life miserable for his brother. If Godfrey so much as looks at a girl he teases him about it." She sighed. "Anyway, Stuart will be going away, and he won't have much time to think about girls. I was worried last night, he seemed so anxious to see that Thurlow youngster, but I guess it didn't mean anything."

Maynard had listened absently, his wife's speculations adding to his deep contentment. At the Ransoms' the evening had passed more pleasantly than usual. Augusta had played well and patently enjoyed her partner's friendly sallies; and she also was in high humour—gayer, Maynard thought, than she had been since her father's death—when they returned home after eleven. She had won five dollars and made two grand slams. Together they agreed that even with Stuart away next year, that even though they would be in mourning and the house still unfinished before spring, they might have a very good

time, provided—Maynard made the reservation purely mental—they did not see too much of each other.

She retired, bidding him a cheerful good-night; and still wide-awake and stimulated after the game, he mixed himself a highball and sat down with a magazine. He had not felt so quietly, so inexplicably happy for weeks. The whisky sent a pleasant, voluptuous torpor through his mind; thoughts and fancies, random recollections and vague pictures floated there lazily, or turned in little eddies, like leaves upon a placid autumn stream. He let his magazine fall to the floor. After all, he reflected, there was reason for his contentment. Life was sweeter, richer now than it had ever been; it was just beginning to yield the harvest he had sown in hard work and patient, undeviating pursuit of his life purpose. Riches he had wanted, and the leisure to cultivate and taste of life exquisitely; they were his. He smiled as he recalled his youthful faith in the phrases, the somewhat vague significance of his creed—tasting of life, enjoying it! What a young hedonist he might have been, had he not been hammered on the hard, disciplining anvil of the Moldenhauers! Yet it was pleasing to appraise the extent and value of the compromise with himself, to look back upon the striving and the occasional bitter taste of his marriage, secure in the knowledge that it had been worth while.

Yes, for the best was yet to be. Stuart was coming along. If there were nothing else, the boy had repaid him, a thousand-fold, for what sacrifices he had made. Loveless, no doubt, his marriage had been; but that ache was of the past. Enid? . . . ah, lucky, lucky, to have escaped *that!* Certainly one could not have everything, as he had once told the boy. For that matter, he might still—but no! whatever the loss, he would be reconciled. And the thought was reassuring that the occasional hunger would grow more fugitive and less insistent as the years marched on.

There would be potent distractions, ample recompense—one could taste of life very well on two hundred thousand a year.

What could they ever do with all that money? It was almost indecent to have so much. There were a thousand ways, of course, to absorb it in the richer adornment and elaboration of life; he had dreamed of them all in the years when he was poor. But not a way, he reflected, but what returned upon himself, themselves. Already they were too self-centred; and as one grew older such a situation as theirs imposed its inevitable penalty of smugness and selfish satisfaction with the scheme of things. No longer could he lose himself in business, as he had once done, because the necessity and incentive had alike disappeared. And that forgetfulness of self—or at least self-absorption—was essential to happiness, he had come slowly to realize in the Moldenhauer school.

There was charity, to be sure. Old Moldenhauer had given a lot, and his bequests were the kind he believed in; they represented the best that money could do intelligently applied. What could he do, he and Augusta? Perhaps if he got his wife interested in doing for others, social work of some kind, she might be different . . . sweeter, now that her father had died. He would do more for his employees—things like recreation centres and rest rooms for the women—and he would back that home-building project for the employees of the plant, if business continued good and they showed as nice a surplus at the annual report as he expected. Of course, there would be another fight over wages—they were always wanting more. Did it get you anywhere, all this coddling of labour?

Well, one thing he would do—pay more attention to the way things were going at the brewery. Since the old man's retirement he suspected them of shutting their eyes to a lot, selling to crooked saloon-keepers who ran wide-open, and to dives and houses. He would go into the matter to-morrow, get the sales-manager on the carpet and start a thorough house-cleaning. Yes, and if they ever got a chance to sell profitably, he'd dispose of the property, even though it yielded a larger return than the money would invested elsewhere. Stuart's future, he had

always told himself, should not be tied up with saloons and the making of beer. Besides, if this prohibition talk increased . . . But he did not take much stock in the supposed "danger" to the breweries, and the agitation made him sick. What could they do—a lot of visionaries, pious preachers, fanatical women? Take the workingman's beer away and make him more discontented than ever? If it weren't for the cheap whisky there'd never be any trouble. . . . A few drunkards who couldn't let the stuff alone, who made their families wretched; the weak, the irresponsible and vicious, riff-raff that would be a burden on the community in any case. Fellows like this Andrews. . . .

Why couldn't he do something to help that woman and her child? Some half-forgotten sermon vaguely occurred to him as he thought about her. There was the sort of well-doing that enriched the doer: it would be his own. Charity, social betterment work, movements to ameliorate working and living conditions were all good, but they were impersonal and a little too heartless and scientific in their calculating application. They left him cold. . . . Mrs. Andrews ought to be sensible and return to her family, as Art said. Still, he could see her point of view, and sympathize with it. She was too proud to suffer that humiliation, the sneers and malicious gossip of a small town; and he admired her pride. If she had any business ability . . .

He got up and paced the room excitedly as the idea worked out its implications. Why not write her a little note and arrange to have a frank talk with her? An odd thing to do before her trial, but if she might count on something, look to the future with the assurance of being free to work out her own destiny, it would rob the legal ordeal of its worst terrors. Surely he could find her a good position—or it might be that he could influence her to go back to her family. If he approached her in the right way, and made her feel his disinterested sympathy and desire to help, she could take no offence.

. . . After three false starts he succeeded in drafting a note which seemed unobjectionable. Beginning with an expression of sympathy and a wish that he might be of service in some way to her and her child, he asked the favour of an interview "for the purpose of submitting an idea" which had occurred to him; adding:

> I realize that it is presumptuous of me to make such a suggestion, in view of our very slight acquaintance, but I sincerely desire to help you in whatever measure I may.
>
> I am acting entirely on an impulse of my own, without my brother being cognizant of my intention.

He smiled as he addressed the envelope, the street and number writing themselves down without his conscious direction; he had not succeeded in erasing them from his memory.

A thrill of satisfaction went through him as he sealed and stamped the note. He had followed an impulse, as he said—a wild, quixotic impulse, such as his reason had usually, in the past, found time to ridicule and reject. Already misgivings assailed him; the woman might put him down as a middle-aged philanderer trying to start a flirtation. The manifest objections would increase and multiply, he knew, by morning, and he would doubtless end by tearing up the note, as he had destroyed the address before. Well, he wouldn't this time! He would thumb his nose at reason. Exultantly he hurried out of the house with his letter, reached the nearby corner mail box, and dropped it in, with a defiant slam of the iron mouthpiece.

There it was, beyond recall! He walked back slowly, looking up at the myriad quiet stars, feeling the warm sentient night breeze in his hair and against his face, stirring his blood. A late full moon was just rising, pouring ineffable beauty over the rim of the world. Mysterious beauty, brooding over the houses and the empty, silent streets, beauty in a cloak of silver. . . . He breathed in the heavy night scent of flowers.

His heart went out to the jewelled loveliness of the night and the sheer, breathless wonder of living. Ah, somewhere in the world, beyond reason and the jibes of the cynic years, there was romance and beauty. For a long time he lingered on the porch, thinking of that summer night, infinitely long ago, when he had sat there struggling between his longing for Enid Wilkinson and the knowledge that he must not go back. Abruptly he put away the reminiscence, rose, and went inside. He was at peace.

CHAPTER XIII

JUNE AFTERNOONS

I

ARTHUR'S voice, over the telephone, sounded faintly derisive. "Don't you ever read the papers? The case is set for next Tuesday. I haven't any more chance of getting off for golf to-day than a lifer."

"How is Mrs. Andrews standing up under the strain?" Maynard inquired.

"Fine. Why shouldn't she? She hasn't anything to worry about. Why not ask how *I'm* holding out under the strain?"

"I'm not particularly interested in you or your ordeals. I'll call you again when you're less flippant. You say it starts Tuesday?"

"Yes, but it won't get really interesting for a couple of days after that. If you want to join the gallery of the curious and be in on the big fireworks——"

"I don't, thanks."

He left the telephone in a mood of disgust with the law, the Andrews case, and more specifically, with himself. Even the well-ordered pastoral prettiness of the golf links, and the good-natured chaffing of his foursome, two hours later, failed to dispel his irritation. Why had he been such a fool as to write the woman? He did not want, he assuredly could not afford, to get involved in the case in any way. Self-reproach and a melancholy foreboding that Mrs. Andrews would find his note ludicrous, or worse, erect extravagant hopes upon the promise of assistance, hung over him like an ominous shadow through the afternoon.

He played badly, slicing his drives and failing to sink crucial putts that should have gone down easily.

They came to the eighteenth hole, which sloped gently upward in a long expanse of soft, brilliant green, wrinkled with tawny sand pits and Lilliputian grass mounds, in the full glory of the waning June sunlight. Birds sang to them from a thicket beside the fairway, as they strode lightly over the elastic turf to find their drives; innumerable dandelions glittered brightly in the green carpet at their feet; far ahead the small red pennant, rising above a more translucent green, flapped languidly with the zephyr breeze. In the softened, mellow light the earth seemed very old, and sensuously rich and fruitful with man's labours. Beyond the green, the ground swelled to the sharp eminence of the stone clubhouse, set like an antique cameo against the trees.

Maynard lifted a long, high approach shot which soared straight for the flag, hung briefly suspended in the bright air, and dropped on the hill a few yards beyond the velvet edge of the green. Though he knew the shot had gone over he could not find the ball when he came up. The others were also off the green, and for a moment he was alone. He let his feet shuffle through the long, tangled grass, and swept it with his iron. The elation of the perfect swing, the clean impact, and the long, arched flight of the ball faded slowly, and he lifted his eyes from their patient scrutiny of the ground at his feet, glad that the game was so nearly done.

Up on the little hill, the low rambling clubhouse looked cool and inviting in the yellow haze. A group of young women, pretty and graceful in their summer frocks, sauntered out, waiting for friends and husbands coming up the course. The little wind played about their clothing, suggesting and revealing the curving outlines of lithe young bodies. He stood still, staring at them until one recognized him and waved a greeting; then he turned back and absently resumed his plodding hunt for the ball.

The quick vision remained, with its intangible, disturbing beauty, after he had holed out. Youth standing in the sunlight, smiling and eager. . . . He envied them, envied with a sudden fierceness the boys and younger men for whom they waited so gaily, with such thoughtless laughter and savour of the day. They were not for him; he was an alien, who had lost his youth in this ageless pagan world for ever dedicated to the young. He drove home a little sadly, only now and then exchanging a word with his talkative companions. His body was tired, his brain inert and passive. He did not think; he felt. Something of the full-blown beauty and desire of the June day lingered and ached in him, like the poignant memory of a dream.

II

Twenty-four hours later he returned from a nerve-racking and exhausting afternoon spent with the sales-manager of the brewery, to find a small envelope awaiting him at the house. He tore it open avidly, glancing at the notepaper and signature before he read. The handwriting interested him; it was a singularly graceful backhand, with the letters of the words oddly unjoined; and the paper was plain and of good quality. He read quickly:

1720 Monument Ave.
June the Sixteenth.

Dear Mr. Evans:

Your note surprised and gratified me very much. Also it aroused my curiosity, and you know that is always fatal. I rather think it would be better if you did not call until the trial is over. The neighbourhood in which my brother lives is an inquisitive one. If you will write or 'phone when you can come, any afternoon after the trial, I will be in and will be happy to see you. I appreciate your sympathy, and thank you for writing me.

Sincerely,
Florence Howell Andrews.

He could have danced from the sudden feeling of relief and vindication. The woman had not taken offence; she had, ap-

parently, neither deprecated nor misunderstood the spirit of his offer. He read the note again, jubilantly, to make sure, fearing that he might have failed to detect some hidden note of mockery or reservation; but it only seemed the more reassuring on examination.

She was intelligent, she had a sense of humour, and—what secretly pleased him most, for it was least expected—she was practical. Of course it would be better to wait until after the trial! His own sober judgment had said as much, the moment he had come to his senses after writing her. As he studied the brief message it seemed to diffuse certain qualities—decision, directness, common sense—which gave body to his still nebulous conception of the writer as a potential business woman. If Arthur had reported her situation and ambitions correctly, it should not be difficult, when he saw her, to lead the conversation naturally into channels suggesting a small business venture in another town. At any rate, he would lay his cards frankly on the table, and if they proved valueless to her, withdraw.

"The neighbourhood in which my brother lives is an inquisitive one." The personal application of the words, their implied warning, impressed him less than the picture caught by his imagination of her daily persecution. The prying faces at the windows as she went in and out; the treacherous, wildfire gossip; the reporters with their well-intentioned impertinence; the hideous publicity of the trial—what a Golgotha for a high-strung woman and an impressionable child. His pity and indignation depressed him, filled his heart with dismay at the blind injustice of the thing, until he remembered that she had, in a very real sense, reached out to meet his proffered help.

III

The trial was a great success. Arthur so considered it, for it lasted but four days and nothing was "sprung" by the prosecution which he had not anticipated; so did the jury, which at no time suffered from any obstinate inner questioning or un-

seemly demand on its intelligence; so also the vast newspaper-reading and sensation-craving public, which was sufficiently appeased with the immolation of an appealing victim on the altar of notoriety to applaud the acquittal. Even Prosecutor Freeman felt reconciled to the result; for although a well-meaning man, he had never been sanguine of sending Mrs. Andrews to prison; and his reputation as a relentless ferret of crime had been triumphantly upheld.

Moreover, the spectacle was eminently satisfactory from a newspaper point of view, furnishing a column a day of first-class "heart-interest" stuff during a week so conspicuously barren of news that city editors would otherwise have had to rack their brains for copy. They acknowledged their gratitude to the Prosecuting Attorney by a discreet reticence as to the merits of the indictment. Besides, Freeman was politically strong, and it scarcely occurred to his friends to ask whether the case should ever have been brought to trial.

Throughout the four days Mrs. Andrews bore herself stoically, told her story intelligently and impressively, and displayed just the right admixture of calm dignity and dramatic emotion to win the hearts of men. She had the jury from the first, and she never lost them. Her recital of the quarrel with her husband, her description of his insane violence, her passionate indignation at reference to his jealous accusations, were vivid and convincing. When, under adroit questioning by Arthur, she pictured her overwhelming maternal grief and fury during the moment following her husband's shot and the child's fainting, the jury sat upright, their faces working, their fatigue and hunger at the close of a long, confining day forgotten. From that moment the verdict was never in doubt.

If her mother held the centre of the stage, little Jean Andrews was an excellent understudy. Only once during the hectoring cross-examination did she falter; then she faced the Prosecutor and burst out: "You make me sick!" Freeman was obviously flustered. The jury grinned, the gallery yelled

with joy until the Judge threatened to clear the courtroom. That night the *Evening Bulletin* ran a three-column front page cut of "Baby" Andrews, the border elegantly entwined with hearts and smoking revolvers; and the sob artist of the *Star* surpassed herself in a signed "special" under the four-column headline "You Make Me Sick! Says Jean."

The jury finally empanelled was splendidly representative. After much challenging and counter-challenging both sides agreed upon: an Irish plumber's assistant, a white-bearded Jewish pedlar, a German farmer, a frayed and bibulous paperhanger, a Swedish janitor, an illiterate Italian day-labourer, and a pale, dyspeptic floorwalker of doubtful origin. Arthur rejected a saloon-keeper and a brewery-wagon driver on the grounds of possible prejudice against a woman who had taken a drunkard's life. An instructor at the State University who confessed that he never read the papers was regarded with disfavour and dismissed. The five remaining instruments of an august and enlightened justice included two who were suspected of possessing adult intelligence.

A number frankly enjoyed the four days, regarding the trial as an opportunity of catching up on sleep between moments of an entertainment vastly more piquant and sustained than any which their lives had previously afforded.

Perhaps more than any of the others, Mr. Ike Jones, the paperhanger, found it altogether stimulating and delightful. A growing emotionalism, mellowed by surreptitious recourse to his pint flask during the recesses, culminated when Arthur pulled out all the organ stops of courtroom eloquence in his final plea. At the moment of Arthur's solemn exhortation to "look back upon your own lives, think of those golden hours of innocent childhood when you were guided, fed, inspired, and tenderly sheltered in the sacred warmth of a mother's love, when your life meant but one word, one being—*mother* . . . and when you were all the world to that pure and noble creature who had given you the breath of being"—at that moment

Mr. Jones burst into tears. A hush fell over the courtroom, broken only by his heavy, unrestrained, and choking sobs; then was heard a restless shuffling of feet and a confused sniffling from the gallery. The Judge's gavel tapped, but the sound was less austere than usual. Arthur had paused, letting his arm fall limply, a gesture of magnificent impotence before the sublime vision of the twelve tried men and true as babes in their mothers' arms. His head was bowed. Mr. Jones, like a battered and rudderless ship awash in heavy seas, struggled bravely with himself, blew his nose fiercely, and at length mastered his feeling. He was thirsty. The trial went on.

During this dramatic interlude Florence Andrews sat very erect upon her straight chair, her fine face clouded with a faint disgust, her large eyes staring at the wall. The late sunlight of a summer afternoon filtered through a dingy window and kindled her bright hair. It was as if she were burning with a quiet, intense flame. Arthur, glancing at her quickly, wished that she might soften, crumple a little, put her handkerchief to her eyes; he tried covertly to intercept her gaze. Suddenly she stretched her arm about her little girl, drawing the child's head to her shoulder. Arthur's professional instinct was delighted; he thought: "That's the real thing!" Amid a profound silence he took up his peroration, briefly now and in a voice of gentle resignation, for his purpose was already achieved.

"I ask you, gentlemen, to make some slight amend to this woman and her little girl for the misery, the wretchedness, and undeserved opprobrium which they have suffered. I ask that you remove the shadow which hangs over the life of an innocent child. And I entreat you to correct a hideous injustice by acquitting an outraged mother, by letting an innocent woman go her way in peace."

He had ceased to act; he spoke with an entire and very moving sincerity. He raised his eyes from their searching appeal to the jury and for a moment swept the crowded gallery. By the door at the extreme rear, the slanting light falling across

his earnest face and softening its expression of tense compassion, stood Maynard Evans.

Arthur sagged limply into his chair, haunted by that look and enervated by the sudden release of nervous tension and the knowledge that the fight was over. In a daze he heard the jury foreman read the unanimous verdict of "Not Guilty." He rose and reached over to grasp his client's hand. When he looked up again at the fast-emptying gallery, his brother was gone.

CHAPTER XIV

STURM UND DRANG

A LITTLE after four o'clock on the second day following the trial Maynard descended from a Monument Avenue street car and walked slowly toward a small frame house which stood out conspicuously among its brick neighbours a few hundred feet from the corner. Frame houses were rare in Columbus, which at an earlier epoch had laid even its sidewalks in brick. This one, though plain and unattractive with its square front porch and V-shaped slate roof, was further distinguished by a recent coat of yellow paint, a rambler rose vine over the porch, and a well-kept tiny patch of lawn. It was a typical six- or eight-room house of the period, standardized and cheap, the simple plan of which was as easily divined as the character of the neighbourhood; yet it looked impeccably neat, and home-like in a humble way.

To Maynard the neighbourhood was unfamiliar, belonging to that newer section of the north end which had sprung up about the fast-growing State University. Monument Avenue was a thoroughfare with double-track car line which developed into turnpike and interurban line beyond the city limits. A large grocery and drug-store on a nearby corner testified to its populous and quasi-commercial nature. Its lots were small, its houses generally unshaded and set close to the street, its dwellers clerks, skilled artisans, small business folk, all the *petite bourgeoisie* of a newer order who had pioneered, with enterprising allotment realtors as their prophets, into this home-owning land of Canaan.

It was a warm, sultry day. The sky was furrowed with

low-hanging gray clouds that seemed to presage an imminent summer storm. Maynard regretted his motor, which he had left down town in the recollection of Mrs. Andrews's phrase describing the neighbourhood. The street cars, with their smell of dust and burned electricity, their cargo of untidy, perspiring humanity, revolted him. Yet as he remarked the curious gazes of passers-by and loiterers about the drug-store, it required no great imagination to picture the stir which would have been caused by his automobile stopping before the yellow frame house.

A little fatigued from the heat, he reached the porch and rang the bell. The window at his right disclosed, through the gap between its plain white madras curtains, a shadowy small parlour encumbered with a large assortment of furniture—mahogany and leather rockers, a red-upholstered morris chair, an upright piano, a green-shaded gas lamp with bead tassels. His discreet examination was halted by the sound of a heavy step within; a moment later the door shuddered from a violent impulsion and drew back. Before him stood a tall plump woman of middle age, wearing an apron over a calico dress. She blinked at him, not unkindly, through her gold-rimmed glasses, her plump arm straining behind her back to undo the apron.

"Come right in," she welcomed, in reply to his inquiry. "I'm Mrs. Howell, her sister—sister-in-law, I guess I should say. She'll be down in a moment." With one hand she concealed the severed apron behind her ample skirts, with the other took his hat and motioned him to a chair in the parlour. "She was down town and just got back a little bit before you came—she wanted me to tell you she was sorry to keep you waiting. The street cars take so long to get you anywhere! Oh, dear, I do hope"— she swooped in front of him awkwardly, her apron trailing and her eye fixed on a chair—"I hope you'll excuse the looks of this room. Jean leaves her things lying just anywhere!"

She hastily gathered up a large, expensive doll, handsomely attired in tulle and beribboned silk, which lay sprawling on one of the ugly leather rockers. "Jean's the little girl, you know—perhaps you read——" She bobbed up, suddenly flustered, as the doll, bent double, emitted a mechanical and piercing "Ma-ma!"—"We haven't any children of our own, that is, my husband and I haven't—and it's such a comfort to have a little one in the house, though she *hasn't* any sense of order as yet. Of course, she's pretty young—you can't expect everything in a child of six." She was quite breathless, her large blue eyes kept blinking at him almost childishly, her cheeks were pink from excitement and exertion.

"I'm sure she must be a great source of happiness to you," Maynard murmured.

Both were still standing, facing each other with uneasy smiles.

"Yes, yes—oh, yes, yes! She's a dear sweet child and—— Oh, won't you please sit down?" She expelled a heavy sigh as she sank on the edge of a chair. "Oh, that rocker's awful—won't you take this other one? It's much more comfortable. Someone's moved the chairs all around so I couldn't tell where the good ones are. I'm so near-sighted."

From the stair landing came a voice, startlingly clear and serene: "Oh, Ella. Can I see you a minute, please?"

Mrs. Howell was already at the threshold of the hall. "Right away, Florence!" she called. "Will you excuse me?" She shot the words at Maynard, and blinked harder than ever; then, suddenly remarking her apron fallen in a heap behind her, made a convulsive reëntry, recovered it, and fled in utter confusion.

The red velvet curtains. faded and dingy at the bottoms, swished back; he heard her puffing and clambering up the narrow stairs. A little repelled, a little amused and curious, Maynard sat down in the morris chair. The Brussels carpet at his feet was flamboyantly new and hideous, with a brilliant yellow motif gambolling about a field of paris green. A low-

pitched conversation, repressed and unintelligible, carried to him. He stared uneasily at the carpet, the curving brass chandelier, the gas logs in the cramped fireplace. . . . The morris chair was stuffy and uncomfortable, and he loitered to the mantel, gazing mournfully at his distorted image in the glass between its dark ionic-topped columns. "Cock-eyed!" he muttered to the mirror. The term seemed applicable to the entire room.

A heavy tread through the hall caused him to face about; but the steps died away, the flimsy floors stirred with their echoing tremors; and he heard a door in the back room open and a kettle grate upon the stove. "Surely not tea," he conjectured, and smiled at the transparency of life in such a house. Overhead the ceiling quivered and he fancied he could distinguish the soft sucking sound of a dresser drawer being pushed in.

A small table laden with books caught his eye. Inspection revealed two volumes of I. C. S. textbooks on Accountancy, the latest Gene Stratton-Porter and R. W. Chambers best-sellers, "Scottish Chiefs," and a worn leather Bible; and in a carefully balanced opposing pile, "Nostromo," "The House of Mirth," and "Tono-Bungay" lay beneath a French-English dictionary and a yellow French paper-back. In the latter he pleasantly recognized one of his favourites—"Le Lys Rouge." He was still glancing at its opening pages, trying to reconstruct the early scenes from the translation he remembered and puzzling out the French with difficulty, when he heard Mrs. Andrews's step on the stairs.

They shook hands cordially and after an exchange of polite commonplaces sat facing each other across the narrow width of the parlour. Mrs. Andrews looked pale and a little tired, he thought. Her mass of heavy red hair, arranged in a pompadour and more elaborately done than when he had first seen her, accentuated the pallor of her face and the singular largeness of her dark eyes. A simple white dress with short close-fitting

sleeves and tightly drawn bodice revealed her rounded arms, and the full, finely moulded lines of her bust and figure. Against the ugly room she appeared exotic, with a quality of sensuous almost tropical luxuriance.

A ghost of a smile flitted across her face as she sat waiting for him to speak. It was harder to begin than he had anticipated; her reserve disconcerted him. At length: "I came as simply as possible, not only because of your note, but because I realize I'm placing myself in a position where it's only too easy to be misunderstood." She was regarding him gravely; he felt that it was a bad start. "Your daughter may be disappointed that I won't be able to take her for a ride to-day. Will you tell her how sorry I am?"

She laughed, to his great relief. "Fortunately for you, that's all settled. She ought to be home any time now—she's over at a friend's—but she understands that she's not to tease you to take her riding—to-day."

"But some day I shall insist upon it; it would give me a great deal of pleasure." She looked dubious, and he pursued: "Yes, really it would. I'm very fond of children, especially little girls. Never having had one of my own——"

"You have no children?"

"A boy—going on fourteen. He and I are great chums." His assurance was returning; he raised the novel which he had been holding at his side. "I've been taking liberties while waiting—trying to remember a little of my French. Do you read much?"

"No. I used to." She spoke slowly, with a slight colour touching her face. "I adore French, and after leaving college I tried to keep it up—for a while. But I might as well have spent my time on Sanskrit. A few weeks ago I met a young man, an instructor at the University who lives in the neighbourhood, and he loaned me 'Le Lys.' Do you know it?"

He was conscious of a vague annoyance, a sense of injury to his conception of her as lonely and persecuted. A young man,

loaning that kind of a book—a masterpiece, of course, but hardly the thing . . .

"Only as 'The Red Lily'," he answered. "I read it in translation."

"Isn't it a wonderful thing? I'm so glad to meet someone who's capable of appreciating Anatole France who isn't—well, *queer*," she laughed. "That is"—she flashed him a brilliant smile—"I take it you're fairly normal. He's been one of my enthusiasms for a long time. It's nice even to meet someone who's heard of him!"

He paid a brief conventional tribute to the author's style, and laid the book on the table.

"Oh, you must read it in French! It seems so much finer, so much less—immoral, you know! I'd so much rather have my morals subverted in French than any other way. Thérèse in French—what an exquisite creature! But here I go raving on, and forget that you didn't come to hear my views on books." She smiled, then dropped her eyes demurely. "Did you, Mr. Evans?"

He laughed. "No. But I find that far more delightful than explaining my purpose in coming. But I'll go straight to the point, even at the risk of appearing—indelicate." She was watching him intently, her face in pale repose, her full lips half parted. "The day I met you in my brother's office I asked him about you, with a view to finding out if there weren't some way I could be of help. However, I didn't propose anything of the sort to him, or even mention what I had in mind. He told me—rather merely intimated—I don't believe he violated your confidence in so doing—that you wanted to be self-supporting, that your means were—limited." He felt her quick, hostile glance. "Now, please don't take offence. I didn't come to force charity on you, or my attentions, either. At the time I wrote you—it was an impulsive thing to do, of course—I had an idea that perhaps after the trial I could help you in a business way. It's very unusual, I realize, my coming to you like this. But it

seemed to be all I could do, if I was to be of any help. Please just consider me as a sort of specialist, like my brother, but in a different field; let it be purely a professional matter. And if there's any mistake it's a mistake of the head and not the heart."

He had turned the phrases over so often in his mind that they came easily and, he thought, convincingly. Yet he felt their inadequacy, coupled with a strong distaste for this rôle of suppliant begging to render a nebulous service. Further explanation—but of what? An impulse, a complicated process of motivation . . . He had rushed in headlong, like a fool.

She replied at last with some hesitation: "You are either paying me a great compliment, or—or quite the reverse. That sounds like melodrama, perhaps—— But I seem to have been cut out for melodrama. My life——" She sighed, then suddenly smiled at him beautifully. "But I'm not questioning your motives, Mr. Evans. Even if I did I'd be tempted to avail myself of your help, for I do need—I would like your advice." She stood up abruptly. "Let's have some tea first, before we talk business. Please don't get up." But from the door she turned back, made an impulsive movement toward him: "I appreciate your coming—I'll say this before we take up the other—it is very fine of you to want to help me, and—I do appreciate it!"

She left him, oddly stirred by the vivid physical quickening which had betrayed her undercurrent of emotion. It was this quality of intensity, he reflected, this vibrant irradiation through her of every shade of thought and feeling, which made her so compelling; at times, as just now, unconsciously seductive. The notion came to him that she would make a magnificent actress; that she was, even now, perfectly identifying herself with a part, unaware that it was a part. But he instantly repudiated the idea as hateful; and it was effaced in the paramount impression of her sincerity and charm. The sound of conversation from the kitchen diverted his consideration to the approaching tea.

It flattered him to think of this as an extraordinary rite in his honour. Yet when Mrs. Andrews came in a moment later bearing a tray, it seemed the most natural thing in the world, and he relieved her of her burden with a renewed admiration for her initiative and self-possession.

"Thank you—here, let's put it down on the table. I'll take the books off," she said. "My sister asks to be excused, as she has some work to do."

"It's awfully good of you, but you shouldn't have gone to all this trouble."

She made a deprecating gesture. "Ella did the work—though it's no bother to get tea. Now, Monseigneur Evans, I await your—your overtures, with impatience!"

"Good." He smiled a little uncomfortably. The tea was very good. "You know I can't suggest anything until I know more definitely what you want to do. Were you thinking of staying here?"

"Not here, surely. And I don't think I want to live in Columbus. During the trial I thought I'd never want to see the place again." She shuddered. "I still feel that way—a little—though lately people have been very kind." She sipped her tea, glanced ruminatively at the pointed toe of her graceful, somewhat worn shoe. "I have a very dear friend, a school chum, who's married and living in Cincinnati. She wrote that she knew of a place she might get for me—assistant to a milliner, with a chance perhaps of working into the business. That doesn't appeal very much—I mean the millinery doesn't—but I realize I can't be choosey. I've never had any experience."

"Have you—relatives living elsewhere who could help you?"

Her face clouded. "My parents live in Belleair, Ohio. I—it's just a small place, and I don't want to go back there—for various reasons——" Her eyes, appealing, met his.

"I understand," he murmured.

"They want to help me—are very anxious to; but I feel—it's

a little hard to explain—I want to be independent. My father hasn't much and can't very well—— At least, I feel——"

"I understand," he repeated. "Nevertheless, don't you think it would make them happy to know they are aiding you and your little girl? Whatever you do, it isn't going to be easy, at first. You'll have less, perhaps, than you've been accustomed to——"

"But don't you realize all that is nothing, *nothing*, if only I can be free?" she cried impatiently. "Safety, a few pennies more or less—what do they amount to? Oh, I'm sick of the sort of life I've always had to live! Sick of small towns and the kind of people you meet in them—ignorance, stupidity, narrowness!" She leaned forward in her chair, her face as flaming as her hair, her voice vehement: "Why—you don't realize—you can't! You've always had everything, been rich, free from cheapness and narrowness—and conventions—I mean the sort of narrow prejudices you find all about you in small places. I won't go back, I won't be bound to them in any way! I want to live! I never have, so far. Do you think I'm afraid of work or privations, so long as I can live my own life, have my child to myself, be among people who are intelligent and kind? . . . Jean and I will be all right, never fear," she ended more calmly.

He was, he realized, a little shocked; and the feeling was startling and inexplicable. Here was a woman who had awakened in him, a little before, old dormant longings for mental freedoms, for subtleties, gay ironies, eclectic talk; who had roused him at the same time to an extreme awareness of her physical charm; and it seemed as if the two conflicted, as if her sex appeal reproached his admiration for her spirit and *esprit*. But surely she was wholly admirable!—and did he want her merely a stuffed doll, a doleful image to inspire his pity? What had the years done to him, that he of all men should recoil before her violent moral revolt? Was he at heart the puritan? Or did he hear some satanic inner whisper, some

obscure prophecy at which the sentinels of self-interest stirred in alarm. . . .

"I have shocked you? But it's necessary, if you are to understand." Her voice softened. "If your imagination isn't equal to meeting me, why, you can't help me." She reached forward, touched his hand lightly with the tips of her fingers: "I want you to help me."

He straightened, his teacup nearly slipping from his grasp. She had drawn back, was regarding him with frank eyes. . . . "Cincinnati," he repeated, temporizing. His pulses leapt. "I—what kind of work have you in mind?"

"The millinery thing is the only possibility, unless——"

His eyes met hers boldly. "Unless what? My imagination is quite equal to following you—as far as Cincinnati."

"Well—if I had the money I'd start a tea room. I've often thought of something like that." There was a pause. "Would you be willing—I might as well ask you frankly, since you've come to me—willing to loan me the money? I think I could make a go of it. Of course, I wouldn't want you to do it because you felt sorry for me; not against your business judgment. But I really think—honestly, I think I could make it a good investment for you. It's the sort of thing that's new, in vogue. A smart place, good things to eat—in the right location——"

"My dear woman, notwithstanding the excellence of this cake and tea, what a stock salesman you would make! Your real future, I'm convinced, lies along promotion lines." He laughed, the more heartily for knowing that a perilous crisis was past. She was smiling, rosy; the tired look had disappeared. But he was not yet ready for the surrender he desired. "I haven't a doubt as to your ability," he declared. "The only thing is, you have no acquaintance there, have you?'

"So much the better."

"People would find out, in time, about your unhappy experience. These things have to be considered. Your competitors would do their best to hurt you. I don't want to be

discouraging, but I don't think you fully realize all the hazards. And you'll be in a strange city, with problems of management, responsibilities, you've never had before."

"I've thought of all that. I'm not afraid of it—nor of what people might say. What can they say? Of course, they'll know about it, talk about it for a while. But it will soon be an old story. And wherever I'd be, I'd have that to go through." After a pause she went on: "As for the business end of it, this isn't any new plan of mine. I've thought of something like this for years. There were times when I was on the point of leaving him. . . . I would to God I had!"

She suddenly broke down, sobbed with her face buried in her hands. He was tremendously agitated; incoherent words escaped him: "There, there. Oh, don't think of it—don't, please! That's all past—over—*don't*. . . ." He was pacing the room.

With an effort she controlled herself, wiping her eyes with a tiny handkerchief. A street car thundered past, shaking the little house, and a moment later an impetuous step sounded on the porch. Mrs. Andrews rose, hesitated, and went to the door.

It was Jean, glowing with happy excitement over her afternoon and openly curious about her mother's caller. "You didn't bring your auto," she boldly reproached him, after an account to her mother of her excursion.

"No, Jean, I couldn't this time. But we'll have that ride—I haven't forgotten."

He glanced at his watch: five-thirty. The man, Florence Andrews's brother, would arrive any moment. He shrank from the thought of meeting him. The remaining preliminaries to the tactful banishment of Jean seemed unending.

They were alone, finally, once more; Mrs. Andrews still standing, facing him inquiringly. "I must be going," he said. "Please don't think I mentioned the difficulties just to be discouraging. I have every confidence in you, and I'll help you,

of course. That's what I really came for, you know. We can arrange the money part after you've looked over the ground and made your plans more fully." Her face was radiant; she was very close, and her eyes were smiling into his. "You"—he resumed, "when do you think you'll go?"

"It's wonderful of you! Oh, I can't tell you." Her hands made a quick movement toward him; he seized and held them. She was lovely, palpitant—he no longer cared—he must leave—any moment now. "When will you go?" he repeated, pressing her hands.

"When?" She pulled away suddenly. "Any time.—Tomorrow, I think."

He followed her. "The reason I asked," he began unsteadily, "I have to be in Cincinnati the end of the week."

"Yes?" she cried. "We can go over the ground together then."

"Where will I find you?"

She found a pad on the table and wrote down the address and telephone. He stared at her profile, at the softly rounded curve of her chin and mouth that so strangely stirred him. His hand trembled as he took the paper from her.

"I'll call you Friday afternoon," he said. "Good-bye."

She moved with him toward the door. "You mustn't think——" she said suddenly; and stopped. The colour flooded her face. "I wouldn't let you if it weren't that—— Oh, but I hate pretence! You've been so fine, so incredibly kind—I can't tell you. It's not the money." She stepped back quickly. "Oh, no, you must go."

She turned and ran up the stairs. He closed the front door softly behind him.

The outside air was breathless; intolerably and portentously still, like the profoundest depths of the sea. The small houses seemed huddled closer together, as if shrinking fearfully before the suspended storm; the few diminutive trees were silent black effigies against a lurid, weirdly luminous sky. Maynard looked

up absently, fascinated by the great banks of sable clouds piling up overhead, driven mercilessly by an invisible higher gale. Even as he looked, the first heavy drops of rain struck his face, and he quickened his step, crossing the street in the direction of the corner drug-store. A great whirling cloud of dust blinded him; now the wind was sweeping him, the rain lashing his face. Rapidly he bore forward. A fierce, primitive elation at the force and grandeur of the elements surged within him; yet it was but a derivative of the immense and deeper exultation that drove him on. Passion exultant beat in his blood, and in his brain, like the blare of trumpets above the storm, the knowledge that if he willed it the woman would be his.

CHAPTER XV

THE SECOND FATE; THE THREADS ARE JOINED

I

ON THE night following Maynard's interview with Mrs. Andrews, Stuart made an important discovery. Alone in the library, seeking a book to while away the hours before bedtime, he had renewed his acquaintance with Edgar Allan Poe. That in itself mattered little; he had read the tales before, and even been aware that this, one of his favourite authors, had descended to the writing of verse. The really important fact was the discovery, hitherto unsuspected, of poetry that actually had some sense to it.

It was more than an æsthetic awakening: it was an inspiration, a rapture—a spiritual crisis which had its sources in a colloquy between Stuart and Charles Wilkinson on the ill-starred afternoon of certain calls—when Gobie had been left master of the situation in the Thurlow parlour. On that afternoon Charles, a very superior young man about to enter college, had condescended to enlighten his visitor as to prep. schools in general, and in particular, what a first-year boy should and should not do. While maintaining a patronizing manner, as befitting a gentleman of eighteen conversing with a youngster, he had shown a desire to be truly helpful. Stuart, he thought, wasn't a bad sort of kid; and the latter's eagerness for information impressed Charles as auguring well for his future. He hoped Stuart would like Andover, though it was a pity he wasn't going to Hotchkiss; he hoped the boy would try for baseball and later elect Princeton; where, if he developed

any pitching ability, Stuart might find favour among the elect and some day shed lustre on their native town. Above all, he devoutly hoped the novice would avoid the mistakes that Gobie had made during the past year at Hotchkiss.

"I told him," Charles had narrated. "I talked to the kid a lot, and tried my best to look after him. Wanted to see him get in with the right crowd, of course, and all that. It was all hunky-dory for him at first, as long as I kept sort of in touch with him, but of course I had a good deal to attend to myself, looking after the team, and I couldn't be his nurse. Well, first thing I knew he was going around with a couple o' clowns that would 'a' queered even Chuck Spencer, if he'd been seen with 'em. . . . You never heard of Chuck? My Lord, you *have* got a lot to learn!" After a brief biographical sketch of the celebrity, he proceeded: "Well, these birds—one of 'em wrote poetry. Just imagine it—that was all anybody knew of him—that he wrote poetry and went to tea parties at the English master's house. First thing I knew Gobie started the same damn foolishness, writing sweet little verses for the school paper. He got in wrong so quick that even I couldn't help him much. Whatever you do, Stu, lay off that sorta stuff and don't have anything to do with the kinda birds that go in for it!"

Stuart had absorbed it all, taking pains to charge his memory with such verbal gems as "clowns" and "hunky-dory." The tale of Gobie's waywardness soothed and restored his spirits—after all, Gobie wasn't so much in a man's world, however successful he might be with fresh young girls. The latter fact was, however, painfully fresh in his mind, and he could not refrain from observing: "I guess Gobie's sort of sweet on the girls, isn't he?"

"I don't know much about what he does around here," Charles replied, a faint spark of loyalty awakened. "Can't be bothered to keep track of all these kid affairs." He hesitated before divulging a delicious bit of gossip which suddenly occurred to him. Stuart's deferential awe swayed him, tempted

him, and he conceded: "He's got a crush on this little Helen Thurlow, I guess. She falls for this poetry stuff, and Gobie sent her a lot of verses he'd written at school. Guess he's got quite a drag there."

Pondering it all afterward, Stuart felt a strong conviction that Helen Thurlow had gone out of his life for ever. She had put herself beyond the pale. As for what Gobie did, it was a matter of complete indifference to him.

Meeting her accidentally on the street a few days later, he had barely contrived a frigid nod. She had replied by asking when they were going to have another game on the next-door lot. Before her disarming frankness and cordiality he had gradually abandoned his attitude of careless *hauteur;* and the temptation to throw out dark insinuations as to Gobie had succumbed before a perception that they would neither be effective, without much explanation, nor in good taste. By the time she left him, after two blocks' walk, he had already —though he knew it not—forgiven her for everything. As a parting shot she had suggested that they take a ride some day; and instantly he had absolved her of blame and transferred the last of his animus into a double portion for his rival.

Therefore, it was with a deepening emotion, on the evening in the library, that he read over a small poem in the morocco-bound set of Poe:

To Helen

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan barks of yore
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

Here was poetry that meant something! He read it over again and again. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen. He memorized it with painstaking and loving labour, closing his eyes and whispering each line. Then, having successfully repeated it twice without glancing at the book, he set out to copy it in his large round hand on a sheet of his father's notepaper. The first stanza seemed to him perfect as it stood, but the second awoke misgivings as to its suitability; and in the third, the word *Psyche* was an enigma. "On desperate seas long wont to roam"—he liked that . . . but *hyacinth hair!* Doubtful; very doubtful. After long and anxious study he substituted *brown:*

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy brown hair, thy classic face——

It didn't sound just right, but no matter—he had better be conservative. With a flourish he signed his name at the end of the stanza and addressed an envelope to Helen Thurlow.

II

That was the night before Maynard had promised to meet Mrs. Andrews in Cincinnati. She herself had left the day before; and at the last minute, although he had not talked with her since the call, he had sent violets to the Monument Street house without a card.

To-night he told himself he must not go. The probable consequences of the trip presented themselves under no false colours. It would involve him to a point where he would scarcely be able to withdraw; and he knew well enough that, once committed, he would go on. Illusions as to what it might lead to,

what he himself wanted it to lead to, he had none. Already, by sending the flowers, he had clearly emphasized the personal side of their venture; it was too late now to deceive Mrs. Andrews or himself into pretending that such an element was lacking.

He alternately regretted, in the first instance, the transparency of the gesture; and in the second, what seemed to him the cowardice, the cheap, half-hearted subterfuge of not enclosing a card.

What was there, he asked himself, to hold him back? Surely not Augusta, for in his private morality he had developed the belief that where there was no love, there was no obligation—none, at least, beyond that of preserving appearances and sparing pain. She had ceased to love him, long ago. Provided no one knew, provided she was ignorant and his outward duty to her fulfilled, his conscience on that score would scarcely trouble him. But there was Stuart, there were his own secret pledges to himself. And if their cases were reversed, and it were Augusta who sought love elsewhere? Try as he would, he could not help putting himself in her place; the old habit of seeing both sides asserted itself, and threatened all his elaborate structure of justification with collapse. He tried to save it by arguing that, for all he cared, Augusta might console herself any way she pleased. But the prop was flimsy; it would not hold against his pride.

Impatiently he brushed aside the moral question—why should he sacrifice a chance for happiness to mere quibbling? Mrs. Andrews he could do no harm; he could, on the contrary, give her a great deal—security, perhaps even happiness, and the better part of himself. Not all, of course; but for that matter he would ask no more of her than he, on his side, could give. That freedom which she so desired would be hers; and if someday she wished to marry again he would not stand in the way. The very fact of their being in different cities would be an advantage, assuring them each of a measure of liberty, and acting as a check to keep them from sacrificing too much of their separate lives to each other.

And he truly cared for her, he told himself; this feeling was no schoolboy infatuation, no dotard's hunger for youth and a pretty face, but passion mature and, he argued, capable of deep abiding anchorage in intellectual sympathy and understanding. Florence Andrews had a mind, a spirit, which beckoned even at first sight with a glint of precious metal—metal alloyed and somewhat tarnished it might be, but how worth the furbishing! He would seek long before he found another such, who combined so many qualities. How futile to talk of seeking; she had been thrown in his path, offered him by the gods. It was his last, his only chance. . . .

Had he not earned his right to her with his earlier sacrifice of love? Propitiated the gods, perhaps, until they had felt a moment of tenderness, of pity, and rendered him his hostage in the guise of Aphrodite the Divine. Ah, he would take her, he wanted her fiercely! An arrangement which would be almost perfect for them both . . . and must he give her up, abandon her to all the evil hazards of fate, because of an ethical wrong to Augusta and his son? Stuart would be away for a long time. . . .

Then in the evening, returning from dinner at the club, he saw his wife and the boy for a moment before going to bed. Stuart, in his pajamas, had come out to say good-night. He had kissed the boy suddenly on the mouth, the first time in years. His wife, stately, blonde, impassively watching, framed in the doorway of her bedroom against a dim vista of rich furniture and silks. . . . He had sensed her expectation—had kissed her perfunctorily on the cheek. That kiss had hurt. . . . In the quiet luxury and security of his bed he cursed himself, and tried to wipe from his brain a scheme so fatuous, so incredibly wicked and impossible.

III

He passed a wakeful and unhappy night. In his office the next morning he composed a brief telegram to Mrs. Andrews,

saying that he had been detained, that a letter followed, and asking her to go ahead with her plans. But as he began the letter, framing in his mind a frank avowal that he could not see her, and wondering how to soften it so that she might not feel hurt, it occurred to him that a long distance call would serve him better than the wire. By merely asking for the house where she was staying, he would avoid compromising himself or her; and on the 'phone he could assure her of his support in any project she might entertain.

He tore up the telegram, and leaving his letter unfinished, had the call put through. The time passed slowly as he waited; it would pass still more slowly, he reflected, through the long afternoon. He would think of her, he could not help it, and as the hour approached when they were to meet, would wish he had gone. Was it always to be like this—feeling that life was baffling, that it had cheated him; always giving up, and longing for what might have been? Where were those resources he had once mustered so proudly, those embellishments of life which were to make it rich and sweet? Now if ever he would have need of them, if the fabric of his life were to be proved substantial.

But a greater strength would come from Stuart; after all, it was the boy who must help him. Stuart was interested in automobiles, had urged him to buy a new model; and there was the new house, with the stonework nearly done, which he had lately neglected. He decided to surprise the boy by arranging for an automobile demonstration; later, they might drive out to Magnolia Heights. After making an appointment for four o'clock with an agent, he called the house and asked for his son.

But Stuart, instead of greeting the proposal with joy, seemed strangely apathetic, even reluctant. "I'd like to go, all right, Dad," he explained somewhat uneasily, "but I don't know about the time. I've got an engagement for part of the afternoon."

"Can't you give it up?" Maynard asked; and the boy was surprised by the sharp anxiety in his voice.

"Why . . ." There was a long pause. "Why, Dad, if you want me to——"

"No, never mind, Stuart, if you don't want to."

But the boy was already stricken with remorse. "I guess I can make it by four o'clock, Dad," he conceded.

"Very well. I'll call for you at the house at that time. Good-bye."

"I'd like to go, Dad," Stuart added; but his father had hung up.

A few minutes later Maynard's 'phone rang again; it was the Cincinnati call. He dismissed his secretary and closed the office door. A woman's voice, barely audible in the receiver, informed him that Mrs. Andrews was out, and would not return before late afternoon.

"No, there is no message." He banged the receiver on to its hook with an imprecation and rewrote the telegram he had destroyed, addressing it to Florence Howell. Then he finished his letter, got his hat, and walked to the Western Union office. As he handed the message to the girl he had a strange feeling that, with a piece of yellow paper, he was giving the last of his youth away.

IV

"Faith, Hope, and Praise; but the sweetest of these is Praise" —thus might Stuart have paraphrased the Apostle at three o'clock that afternoon, talking with Helen Thurlow in the back-yard of the Thurlow home. To be sure, his portion of the divine fire of poets had been less a draught than a very fleeting glimpse of the Pierian Spring; to be sure the sweetness of the praise, the honey of his reward, was flavoured with a somewhat bitter taste as his conscience stirred faintly and Helen's eulogiums swelled into adulation. But even with the alloy, it was intoxicating; and he had never dreamed that life could hold a moment so dazzling as when Helen had assured him, with rosy cheeks and shining eyes, that he was simply wonderful and the very nicest boy in town.

"And you made all that up about *me?*" she had asked, with a novel trace of shyness which was most becoming. "Oh, Stuart, I never—I never *dreamed* you could write such—such *beautiful* things! How did you ever think of all of them? Only there was just one thing——" Her eyes avoided his, and she stopped. "No, I won't show such ignorance, either. Never mind."

"What thing?" he asked nervously.

"Why, I'm an awful dummy, but there was just one thing I didn't quite understand." Her blush grew deeper. "Do you mind my asking? . . . No? Well—what are Ni—you know, those kind of barks you spoke about?"

"Nicæan barks?" He was suddenly very grateful to his memory. "Why—they're—you see, Helen, they're just a sort of tree." He would have gone on, though his throat felt parched and his tongue thick; but Helen stopped him with a quick look as her hand stole softly into his:

"I'm such a dummy! Stuart, you're—you're just a *genius!*"

Then it was that his conscience had cried most sorely, and for a second even urged him to make belated acknowledgments to his Muse. A glance at the girl's happy face, however, stilled the impulse. He could never be so cruel as to disillusion her; and the crisis past, his conscience, with a last despairing groan, succumbed to total paralysis. Then they had taken a ride on their bicycles, a long coursing through the summer streets and quiet country lanes on the edge of the city, lined with trees and green fields of waving corn; and the poem had been left in the background while they talked aimlessly and happily together, on a thousand irrelevant subjects, or passed long silences in marvelling how such perfect companionship could be. Such breathless moments, as they raced down level stretches, such confidences freely imparted and reverentially received as they rode slowly side by side; such pure enchantment as the skies grew roseate and flamed into sunset splendour . . .

Maynard, waiting at the Broad Street house, listened to the

salesman's explanations with a growing anxiety. It was four-thirty, and Mr. Sweeney, wishing to dispel the gloom which hung about so excellent a prospect, was setting forth the unique and incomparable merits of his roadster with a kind of lyrical fervour. "And you see, sir, this double ignition system gives an intensely hot spark which will give unlimited power and speed, and—I need not point out—will—er—ignite the poorest mixture. Then there's this here automatic oiler. Ab-so-*lute*-ly dependable, sir—it will never go wrong—and you won't find it on any other car. Well, that is, not just the same eye-dentical system, sir. And speaking of poor mixture, I need not point out, it's something that never happens on the Thomas. Now, if you'll allow me—just take a look at the carburetor, sir—I'll just lift up the hood——"

"It isn't necessary," Maynard interrupted, looking at his watch. "I'll buy the thing."

A quarter to five, and the boy not home. He could not remember Stuart ever failing to keep an appointment before. Something must have happened.

"I think," he told the salesman, "if you don't mind, we'd better take the car and look for my son."

They drove out Bryden Road, slowing up beside the baseball diamond adjoining the Thurlows'; but a single glance showed only an empty lot. Then Maynard bethought himself of the swimming hole, and horried possibilities of cramps and diving accidents flashed across his mind. The new roadster responded by covering the distance at forty miles an hour. Stuart was not at the river; only a few strange boys whom he had never seen, who hid their nakedness at his approach by plunging into the water, and stared at the motor with incredulous eyes. No, there had been no one all afternoon who answered to his description.

"I'll tell you, I'm worried about him," he said to Augusta, on arriving at the house; and at her suggestion telephoned the Ransoms, the Duprees, the Bonants, and Enid Wilkinson.

Only Henry Dupree had any news of Stuart; he had seen the latter, sometime after lunch, passing alone on his bicycle out Broad Street. Stuart, it appeared, had ignored his distant shout of salutation. By the time the round of friends had been interviewed dinner was announced; still no Stuart; and after a twenty-minute wait Maynard and Augusta sat down to a morose and miserable meal.

As they were finishing, the butler brought in a telegram for Maynard; he excused himself and anxiously tore it open. It read:

> Disappointed unable to do anything without you please come.
>
> HOWELL.

He crumpled it in a ball and thrust it in his pocket.

"Anything—about——?" Augusta asked slowly.

"No. Just business."

After a long silence she declared abruptly: "You know, Maynard, I've been wondering if he mightn't be with that little Thurlow girl. It worries me—he was so crazy to see her that time, and he never said a word about the call, afterward. He never used to be so—so secretive."

"Call them up," Maynard said in a dead voice.

"I'd rather not, under the circumstances. It would be much better if you called them, Maynard."

"Call them up!" he demanded peremptorily; and at the violence of his tone, and the strange, set look on his face, his wife stood still, amazed.

"Please do it," he requested, more softly. "I don't feel as if I could be civil to the Thurlows—or any one!"

She left the room, and he still sat very quietly, his hands gripping the arms of his chair. But after a moment he got up and walked into the living room; and setting a match to the crumpled telegram, watched it curl up in tiny flames beneath the andirons of the fireplace. Then he ascended to his room and methodically started to pack his Gladstone bag.

Augusta's step, crossing the living room below, carried faintly to him, and leaving the bag open he went down at once. "He's there," she told him shortly. "Just finished dinner. I don't know what possessed him. Said he forgot your engagement until he got out into the country, and when they got back from their ride they sat right down to dinner. He's coming home immediately."

"I see. Thank you, my dear, for calling." He turned slowly, hesitated, and climbed the stairs again to his room.

CHAPTER XVI

ATROPOS—NOVEMBER 12, 1906

IT WAS a chill bleak evening, with a prescience of winter in its ceaseless rain. A low gray mist hung over the river but had lifted from the hills; and now and then the few remaining leaves of the poplars were swept in long, soaring flights by a droning, gustful wind. They swirled across the dripping roof of the little house, clawed fitfully against the streaming windows; or sometimes, when the wind rose, whirled like phantom dervishes down the hill toward the swollen river. A sense of final endings, of the autumn's burial and slow decay, brooded in the closed-in darkness and the interminable rain.

Within, the house was warm and softly lighted, with an atmosphere of peace and comfort. Slow tongues of flame curled in the brick fireplace at the end of a low, white-panelled room. A mahogany gate-leg table had been laid for dinner, and on it candles burned serenely in a pair of brass candelabra; the Dresden china lamp beside the low cushioned couch in the corner glowed warmly through a shade of apricot silk. A fragrance from several bowls of yellow roses, pale and waxen in the candlelight, mingled faintly with the aromatic smell of the burning beech logs and the odours of hot food and wine.

Florence Howell—she had left off the Andrews long since—playfully called the house their *maisonette à campagne*, a name not unappropriate to its situation and use. It was a small remodelled farm cottage, lying in the hilly country on the Kentucky side of the river, a good six miles, on a little-travelled road, from the bridge linking Covington and Cincinnati. Here they motored on the evenings of Maynard's visits, returning a

few hours later to the city, where he left her at her modest lodgings near the tea room; while a tenant farmer looked after the place in their absence. Now, with the end of the fine weather, it grew daily more inaccessible; the road to-night had been a treacherous quagmire; but they had promised themselves a final visit before closing it for the winter and seeking another refuge in town.

Leaning against the fireplace, Florence Howell warmed her outstretched, rounded bare arms. Her copper hair gleamed iridescent with the soft warm radiance of the candles and wood fire; her bronze brocaded gown fell in shimmering folds of light and shadow. She hummed a little song softly, now and then catching her breath, and turning to steal a smiling glance at Maynard in his chair by the table.

"Happy?" he asked her.

She answered with a smile.

"Hear the wind," she murmured, after a moment. "It seems so cruel outside—desolate. I hate to think of poor little Jean with no company but her dolls and her books."

"The Johnsons will keep her amused," he said.

"Not much. . . . Oh, if only——"

"Only what?"

"If we could all be together! If I could have you all to myself . . ."

There was a silence as she gazed at the fire; a log hissed and fell, sending up a shower of sparks into the blackened chimney.

"We can't exact too much—of life," he answered slowly. "Take what we can—the best. Be thankful——"

"Oh, I know, I know. I ought not to be such a rebel."

"It's our last night together for a while, and we mustn't——"

"Mardy! Don't say it—I'm not going to let you go back to-morrow. . . ." Her arms encircled him, and her lips found his. A step sounded, and she moved away quickly as an elderly, dried-up servant woman entered bearing the soup.

They were gayer as the meal progressed. They talked of the tea room, which, after a bad start, was beginning to yield some return for Maynard's money and Florence's hard work; of Jean in her school; of the claret, which was very good, and books and music. Gradually the bright, mellow softness of the time and place stole into them. If there were perilous shoals of reflection to shipwreck their contentment, if questions of the future hung frightfully in the background, they were instinctively ignored. Always they turned back, in their thoughts, to the past; and in their reminiscences sought to recapture something of the intoxication of their first meetings. And Maynard, calling back the summer, between a great tenderness for the woman and a desire to banish the shadow of parting, found himself telling Florence of his son's first love affair.

"And afterward?" she asked, when he finished the account of Stuart's plagiarization. "Did the little girl ever find out about the poem?"

"Stuart told her himself. It took his conscience several days to bring him to the point of confessing, but he finally went and made a clean breast of it. She, I suppose, had heaped compliments upon him until he could no longer stand the deception. And to make it worse, Helen had proudly shown the poem to her mother and sister.

"The girl's mother was too tactful to express her doubts, but with the sister it was a different story. She was incredulous; said Stuart could never have written it, and suggested that he had copied it out of a book. Poor little Helen was furious, and stood up for her swain. You can imagine her, vowing that nothing would ever make her doubt the genuineness of Stuart's poetic genius. That part of it I got from Mrs. Thurlow herself. So naturally, when Stuart admitted to her that he'd taken it from Poe, it was a bitter blow. It didn't help him any to point out that he felt the sentiments of the poem as sincerely as if he'd written it himself—if he'd thought to make such a declaration. She hasn't spoken to him since."

"And he told you about it? I think it's marvellous for him to do that."

"Yes, he told me. He got over the affair quickly enough—his heart wasn't as badly broken as he had thought. One day at Lake Placid we took a tramp together, and when I asked him about the afternoon I had waited for him—the day I wired you—he told me the whole story, though I know it cost him a great effort. He thought he ought to confess to me what he considered black dishonesty. I tell you, Florence, I was very much touched."

She gave him a quick softened glance; for a while neither spoke. Silently he sipped his liqueur; and Florence, turning in her chair, stared at the fire and twirled her slender fingers about the stem of her claret glass. At length she said:

"Mardy, I'll never ask you to do—what I had wanted, had thought, of asking to-night. Oh! you mustn't misunderstand—I just wanted to see—how much you cared. Whether I mean as much to you as——" Her voice suddenly broke, and she sank forward on her knees, clutching his hands. "Oh, Mardy, Mardy, you love me, don't you? You mean so much to me—you've become everything—my whole life. I was going to ask you to give up your wife—no, no! I didn't mean it—I just wanted to test you, Mardy. I don't deserve a tenth of what I've got—I'm not good enough to be your slave. I should be content." She was sobbing, her head buried against his knees. "But, oh, Mardy darling—it's so hard not to have you all the time. Forgive me. Oh, tell me that you love me—that you would give them up if I asked it—but I'll never ask you, Mardy, never! I just meant it as a test."

He soothed her, calmed and caressed her; bade her sit quiet in a chair and drink some wine; then, after she had dried her eyes, called the servant and silently watched the table being cleared. The wind moaned in the chimney; the sound of the rain beat always in a drumming undertone; presently the last log broke and fell in glowing coals. Deliberately he put on

another, conscious that she was regarding him out of tear-stained eyes. When they were alone once more he drew his chair close to hers, and took her hand.

"Florence——" he began; but she stopped him, saying: "I won't be weak again. I hate myself right now; I was a perfect fool. It's just the thought of your going back. And then that awful wind, and the leaves——"

"I know. You were overwrought. It's being alone so much, and working and worrying over that tea room." She smiled wanly and pressed his hand with a convulsive pressure. "I love you," he went on, "—love you so much that I can't stand to see you harassed by worries. Worries over money, especially—they're so needless. I want to spare you all that—what good is my money if I can't? Now, I want you to let me get you a decent place to live, and accept a certain amount——"

"No, Mardy." She sat erect, was very calm. "Don't let's go into all that again. I simply can't, that's all. I won't be a—a kept woman. I can't be your wife, and the only alternative is for me to go on as I am—independent. It's the only way I can keep my self-respect. Don't you understand, darling? I've made pretty much of a mess of my life, and there isn't very much left. I've got to bring you something—something I can call my own."

He had got up, and was pacing the room. For a little he stopped beside a window and, raising a shade, peered out. He heard the ceaseless rain beating on the bare, soggy earth; but there was nothing visible beyond the glistening pane—only the rain, and darkness. He pulled down the shade softly, and for an instant stood still, looking at the woman in her chair.

Who knows what revelation came to him in that moment? Whether he had a vision of the muddy rain-drenched road leading back to the city, saw their motor skidding at the foot of the long hill and plunging into the river; whether he glimpsed behind the curtain, and in his soul knew they would die there together . . . who shall say?

Something he felt rather than saw, some gleam of perspective comprehension of the past, some apprehended vista of the future. He had been thinking, in that moment, of his life. With that mysterious power of strong emotion which comes twice or thrice in a lifetime, to synthetize forgotten ideas, associations, impressions, into a single overwhelming perception almost occult, he had glimpsed his life as a whole; its compromises, its half of courage and its half of cowardice; its triumphs, its seasons of beauty and nobility; its loneliness and essential selfishness and waste. Waste! The flowers and gardens of old pleasures, memories, withered before the creeping desolation: waste! There was no unity there, no splendid continuous purpose to give harmony to the whole; no continuity save that of his ego, himself. Himself, his son, his selfishness. . . .

And then the sudden, blinding insight. . . . It was his life *as a whole:* a complete thing, finished. It did not matter what came, he had reached a period. There was nothing essential to be added, he knew, though life went on and on. Nothing, unless . . .

"Florence, you spoke of bringing me something that you can call your own. I have nothing of my own to give you, unless I give it all. I've never given you anything, Florence; never really given——"

He took her hands and raised her to him; there was a note of unutterable sadness in his voice, as if he were saying a last farewell to all he loved:

"You asked me if I'd marry you. I can't break with the past; it's there, it's living, it goes on. Don't you see? There's my son—all that's good that remains. But the rest of my life, Florence—the rest I'll give to you."

"No, Mardy!" she cried. "No, darling——"

His face suddenly twitched; he whispered: "But, oh, God! Not my son. . . ."

But she had not heard the final compromise. She, with the

all-or-nothing soul of a woman in love, had not understood. . . . "Oh, no, Mardy, I won't let you, dear—you shan't! But you've made me so happy, Mardy!" It was half laugh, half sob, as they clung together like lost souls. Then she slipped out of his arms, and smiling, blew out the candles, one by one.

BOOK TWO

PART III

And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war.

CHAPTER I

ROOM-MATES

TO STUART EVANS, sitting with Gobie Wilkinson in the smoking compartment of the Columbus sleeper and contemplating life with that serenity which follows a good breakfast when one is twenty-two, the outstanding fact appeared to be that he was going home. Other facts, marshalled pleasantly in retrospect, formed a vague, hazy background of contentment which brought his anticipation into sharper relief; the happy recollection of his junior year at Yale, the pin on his vest proclaiming him a member of a senior society, the consciousness that his new suit looked very well, that Yale had won the boat race on the Thames, and that he had acquitted himself creditably on the Long Island house party they had just left—all inspired the conviction that life was very satisfactory. The past had been good; and the immediate future, which was the only part of the future worth thinking about, promised as well or better. Specifically, it promised seeing Helen Thurlow, with whom matters had lately followed a propitious course; not to mention a round of dances and parties, and a month in the big house with his mother, whom he was impatient to see. Surely he had been justified in dissuading her from the European trip, which offered nothing novel or which might not be realized at another time.

He had exhausted the headlines of the newspaper on his lap; he didn't feel like reading, and Gobie, bent over a book in the corner, seemed undisposed to conversation. In this first week of July, 1914, there was little travel westward, and they had the smoker to themselves. Stuart filled a pipe and turned to watch

the sunlit landscape that was unrolling itself in a kaleidoscopic flux beyond the car window: green vineyards, woodland, fields of corn, and yellow, ripening wheat; and now and then, beyond a clearing, a glimpse of some arm or inlet of the smiling blue lake. The scene was thoroughly familiar—that of the Ohio shore of Lake Erie. And he felt almost a native's affection for it, so often had he travelled the same road during the past seven years, from school to home and back, and on vacations with his mother when they went abroad or to the summer place on the Massachusetts coast.

He thought of his mother tenderly and with that sympathetic, somewhat self-centred complacency common to youth. They had grown very close to each other in these years. He had come to feel her dependence on him, so flattering to his young manhood as he increasingly realized her stalwart independence elsewhere—so novel, after the recollections of his boyhood. He could remember, and with a grim smile now, the time when she had inspired him with awe; but that had been before . . . It was better not to remember. The sudden, agonizing impression of those terrible months following his father's death, of the old feeling that they could never face the scandal, of his grief and shame and loneliness, throbbed in his mind against the effort of his will: the old horror, the old disgust, the old helpless sensation of betrayal. That unhappy year in Germany, his mother's fortitude and pride, so desperately stricken and so unquenchable . . . the loving sympathy of friends on their return. But that was all past, buried, long ago. What a brick she had been. . . .

Automatically he fingered the pin on his vest, grateful to it for having made her proudly happy, and for banishing her last regrets that he had given up his music and the chance to study in Germany.

Home in six hours more! The thought, and that contact with the pin, sent his spirits soaring again. He glanced at Gobie, who was absorbed in Conrad; rose, stretched himself with feline

luxuriousness, and proceeded to a minute self-examination in the full-length glass at the opposite end of the small compartment. The apparition which faced him, the frank quizzical gray eyes and the contour of the long, lean face, with its prominent square jaw and high cheek bones, was reassuring. He straightened his gay-coloured foulard tie, ran his hand over the thatch of bristly sandy hair which, parted on one side of the high forehead, spread over its centre in a curving heap, and noted with approval the slight, fair moustache and the glow of colour beneath his tanned, lustrously shaven cheeks. Unquestionably, the moustache was coming along—if only that down would grow in the middle, just below the tip of his nose. "Not exactly an Adonis, but not so bad-looking at that," he thought, and out of the tail of his eye glanced again apprehensively at his companion. But Gobie read on, and he continued his survey by retreating a pace and bringing his entire person into perspective.

This was difficult, because the glass was short and narrow and the person stood an inch over six feet, in a pair of number ten shoes which refused to be mirrored at the same time as his head. As it was, the head leaned forward, with the result that the eyes met one as if looking up and past the slightly darker eyebrows above; an habitual expression and carriage, as if his body, tired of growing erect after reaching the five-foot mark, had rebelled somewhere about the neck and neglected to prolong the straight, firm contour of the shoulders. The gray English-cut suit hung loosely about his sprawling frame, yet managed to achieve an air of careless distinction. He tried the coat buttoned and unbuttoned, with the lapels spread back and his hands in the pockets; and was engaged in rubbing the dust off his polished tan shoes by standing on one foot and running the other against his trousered calf, when an ironical voice sounded at his back:

"Why, you great, big, homely peacock. How does young Evans look this morning? Still the glass of fashion and the mould of form?"

"Oh, go on and read!" retorted the peacock with a justifiable annoyance; then grinned sheepishly. "Just trying to see how badly I whacked myself shaving this morning."

"Oh, very badly! A regular sabre wound." He submitted Conrad to the gross indignity of covering a prodigious yawn. "Give me a cigarette, Evans."

Stuart tossed him his case. "Just look at that old lake, with the sun on it!" he exclaimed. "Have you any idea where we are, Wilkinson?"

"On a train." Gobie airily expelled a ribbon of whitish smoke.

"I thought so! Wilkinson has been reading—he doesn't know where we are. His prosaic mind sees only a railroad train. No vision, like that of his room-mate! We're in Ohio, Gobie! And we're going home—*home*, I tell you!" He made a quick, stealthy gesture, and playfully closed the book beneath Gobie's careless hand; then jumped up and exuberantly stretched his long legs, half skipping about and grimacing at the other with a jocular and ridiculous elation.

"Nut!" said Gobie, but unable to repress a sympathetic grin. "You've lost my place, you big giraffe! Can't you ever grow up? Go on and look at the lake and let me read."

They were really fond of each other, and manifested their underlying sympathy by the extreme care they took to avoid showing it, and by a kind of playful, affected roughness of speech and manner. When in agreement they were farthest apart, because lacking anything to differ upon they withdrew into their separate egos, which were very unlike; and because they were absurdly afraid of hurting each other, they were always closest when violently opposed. Their friendship dated from freshman year, when they had begun to be train companions on the journeys from home to college and back, and had found themselves, in addition to being the only members of their class from Columbus, simultaneously jilted, for the time being, by the same girl. To Helen Thurlow, who for a time had

held mere freshmen in disdain, belonged the unconscious credit of first bridging the gulf that had separated them since childhood.

There were later bridges. Gobie had never forgotten how Stuart, a better "mixer" and with an early prominence gained from baseball prowess, had manœuvred to secure his election to the same fraternity; how Stuart had encouraged him to keep on trying for the *News* and *Lit.*, and had had faith in his prospects and ability when Gobie himself had none. That his friend was merely paying interest, so to speak, on an older obligation scarcely occurred to him. For it had been the Wilkinsons, first of all, who had met Augusta and her son on their return from Germany, the year following the scandal; it had been Enid's moral support and devoted sympathy which had helped to sustain Augusta; it had been Gobie's friendliness which had first assured Stuart, like a harbinger of fair weather after a winter of distress, that whatever odium might be heaped on his father's name, there was only kindness awaiting him at home. He understood the experience better, and valued it more, as he grew older; he resolved that Gobie and himself, in spite of their dissimilar tastes and divergent characters, must somehow manage to get on. How well they had succeeded was evidenced by their mutual willingness to submit to the final test—they were scheduled to room together senior year.

Physically Gobie was his friend's opposite. He was stocky, and a head shorter; his face was oval, dark-tinted, with an almost Italian purity of outline; and his sombre dark eyes had, perhaps, less humour, but more fire and depth, than Stuart's. He had the face of a young Raphael, and the eager, romantic faith and helplessness of the very young—and very gifted. Being an American undergraduate he hid the faith under a simulated irony, refused to admit his helplessness or his youth, even to himself; and did as little as possible with his gifts. Genuine as were the latter, they were yet of a literary order; and

as Gobie's romance took the shape of dreaming himself a self-made millionaire, they really seemed of little use.

He was reading "Lord Jim"; and when he occasionally raised his eyes to gaze dreamily out on the shuttlecock of green fields and trailing, diffusive smoke, seeing the magical glamour of tropical seas and starlit, Eastern skies. And at the other end of the seat Stuart was chuckling over Fielding's "Tom Jones." Even in their books there was something eloquent of their different characters.

CHAPTER II

PASSING OF A LANDMARK

AS ENID and Augusta waited for the call of the announcer and the opening of the gates, they merely thought of the old Union Station—so long the pride of the city and the background of so many goings and comings in their lives—as a *locus* where, at two-thirty, they would meet their boys.

Augusta looked the younger by ten years. Her flaxen hair, brushed upward in a pompadour, showed only a touch of gray, and left exposed her long masculine ears, very pink, and ornamented each with a single large pearl in the lobe; they were longer than her straight, thin nose. Beside Enid's slender figure, crowned with hair almost white, she was strikingly fair and buxom; very smart and well-groomed also, in her pearl-gray tailored suit, elaborate shirtwaist with cuffs, collar, and jabot of Belgian lace, and straw sailor trimmed in blue. The whole contrasted with her companion's plain lavender summer dress and hat, the inconspicuous attire of a woman whose thin face and dark, memorable eyes looked at once gentle and austere.

They stood together against the iron railing, and as Stuart and Gobie loomed up at the top of the concourse stairs, peering with expectant faces toward the end, Augusta called out her son's name. In a moment the boys were beside them; there were exclamations, embraces, and a shaking of hands. Then the four of them stood apart, unconsciously scrutinizing each other, and for an instant at a loss for speech. It was Enid who broke the brief silence:

"Why, Stuart, you've grown a moustache!"

Stuart glanced sheepishly at his mother. Gobie laughed.

"So he has," Augusta observed coolly. "Let me look at it, dear." She appraised him critically. "*Started* rather than grown, I would say. Still it might be worse." She laughed—a brusque, good-natured laugh, and the others joined in. Stuart had coloured, but he, too, laughed. She took his arm, and led the way toward the carriage driveway, the Wilkinsons following close behind.

Enid called: "Don't mind what she says, Stuart. It looks very nice."

"It might be worse," mocked Gobie.

Stuart deigned no reply.

"It really looks very well, dear," Augusta said. They had reached her limousine, and she turned, facing the others. "Enid, I wish you had come with me. We might all have ridden home together just as well as not. But you know"—she addressed the boys—"she would insist on driving that old electric of hers, just because she wanted to be exclusive and have Gobie all to herself. Turned down cold my perfectly good limousine." She laughed again, with a not unkindly though somewhat harsh pleasantry. "Well, we'll see you soon, at any rate. Good-bye."

There was an answering chorus of good-byes; the Wilkinsons got in their electric and moved off; the resplendent liveried footman—a *rara avis* and one of three in the whole of Columbus—closed the shining door upon Augusta and her son. "The perfectly good limousine," which had come from Germany and cost a little more than any other in town, surged forward with a lumbering impulsiveness, clashed its gears, and emitted a streaming billow of airy blue smoke. At the station entrance they passed the electric, and half-turning, waved a second good-bye; then settled back and began their visit together.

Stuart, between his account of the house party and questions of his own as to events at home, was wishing his mother hadn't said that about her perfectly good limousine and Enid's "old" electric. He thought he had detected a fugitive, almost im-

perceptible shadow in Enid's eyes in the instant before she looked at the ground. But Mother doesn't mean anything by it, he argued, and of course the Wilkinsons realize that . . . "Did I meet any attractive girls at the Bakers'? Yes, they had a darn good crowd. Marge Barton was there—you know, you met her in New York in the spring. . . . Oh! don't worry about *that*. I'm still heart-whole and fancy free. Lord, but it's hot! Mother, you certainly were a peach to keep the house open and stay here for me."

She smiled at him affectionately, but a moment later her face clouded. "I suppose you'll want to run off right away and see the Thurlow girl," she said.

"Well—not right away," he parried, with an uneasy smile.

She frowned.

"Don't you like her any better than you used to, Mother? You wrote that she'd been awfully sweet to you."

Drily: "Yes. All the young girls are awfully sweet to me—the ones who have any hopes at all."

"Oh, Mother! Don't be so——"

"Yes, I know, my dear boy. All they ever think of is your—what is it the French say?—your *beaux yeux*."

He was silent for a moment, frowning; then suddenly laughed. "How about the moustache, Mother, since you're listing my good points?"

"I told you, it looks very well."

"You told me it might be worse."

"Oh, Stuart, now don't tease me! I really didn't mean anything. Honestly, I didn't! You look—really, you look handsome!" There was a childlike quality in her distress, an avowal of helplessness before him such as she had never shown until these years of his maturity. "Of course," she added, "I prefer you without it—I don't like to think of you as so grown-up—in one way; though in another way, I do. But I never liked the things, even when they were in style. Everyone used to wear them; your grandfather and . . ." She got the words out

with a jerky effort, and fell silent. "That seems a long time ago," she ended with a sigh.

He rallied her, saying: "Town looks about the same as when I left."

"What do you expect? It's only been a few months. No, my dear boy, it's been years! . . . But the place grows slowly. I bought some downtown real estate the other day, just to amuse myself."

"Just can't keep from dabbling in business!" he laughed. "Mother, I always said you ought to be a business woman."

She was pleased, and launched into an account of the transaction, explaining why the value should increase and what she had realized on similar investments before. Thence she proceeded by a natural transition to social affairs, a subject inextricably bound up in her mental processes with money. How the bridge had gone off Tuesday afternoon; who had won the prizes; the dreadful *faux pas* Mrs. Curtis had made about Laura Pettigrew's first husband; the story about Phil Bonant being put to bed at the Ransom dance; how Mrs. Batterson-Smith had offended the Governor's wife (which she related with triumphant malice and gusto); the difficulty in getting an orchestra for the dance she planned to give on the fifteenth; and a potpourri of other incidents, some of which brought a sympathetic *Ah!* or chuckle from her auditor, while others, less piquant, were heard with only half an ear. The familiar panorama of Broad Street was competing for the boy's attention, and he looked hungrily now at one side, now at the other, as if to fix each detail indelibly in his mind. As they suddenly caught sight of the old residence which had been his birthplace, he gave a startled exclamation:

"Why!—What's happened to the house? They're tearing up the yard!"

Indeed teams were at work clearing the ground; the house was vacant and wore a dilapidated aspect, while a contractor's shanty near by attested to an impending building development.

"I guess I forgot to write you about it," his mother answered,

and related how the last owners had in turn disposed of it, and how the house was to be used for offices and a garage built in front.

He heard her gloomily and with a mounting impatience. "I wish we'd never sold it," he said, when she had finished. "Of course it would come to this sooner or later. A garage! And you didn't sell it, you gave it away!" She was looking straight ahead, her face hard and set; but her lip twitched as he spoke, and he softened at once. "Of course, it's not your fault, Mother—I didn't mean that. It just struck me all of a sudden, their tearing up the place . . . when we could have well afforded to keep it, if only for the sake of sentiment."

"I don't feel that way," she said shortly.

They were already blocks beyond the house, moving along at a rapid rate toward the outer limits of the city. "Sentiment," his mother repeated slowly—"it's all very well, when you're young. It's easy to talk about——"

"I'm sorry, Mother." He touched her arm gently, let his big hand lie over hers. "I just blurted it out—didn't stop to think. Of course it's better as it is."

"Better still if they tore it all down!" The old, hard look had come over her face, and her voice was bitter.

"I'm sorry. . . . Ah, the golf course looks nice! Look! I swear that's Paul on the eighth green." Beyond, he could already see the stretch of green lawn and shrubbery leading from the edge of the links up to the jutting west wing of their house. His compunction at having hurt his mother, so acute a moment before, was swept away in a sudden mercurial elation at the sight of home. "Oh, Mother, it's great to be back! The place looks wonderful. . . . Aren't you proud of it? How those vines have grown. . . . Ah!—here—we—are. . . ."

The last exclamation was drawn out into a cry of satisfaction, excitement, and pride. They had stopped in a stone-flagged terraced courtyard at the rear. The footman was holding the door; Stuart helped his mother out with a tender and trembling

eagerness. The long, spreading stone house seemed to welcome him with a quiet magnificence as a butler threw open the door and ran forward to help with the luggage; and he returned the latter's greeting as heartily as if the servant had been a minister offering him the freedom of some proud and mighty city. Here before him, in stone and tile and plaster, polished wood and casemented glass, stood the outward symbol of Moldenhauer and Evans—of their industry, their struggles and ambitions; of wealth, and the security and prestige it conferred. Was it not pleasing to the sight, and strengthening in its mute reminder of his pinnacle? It was as if life had breathed a special benediction upon him; and being generous and young, he felt like shouting aloud his gratitude and passing on the benison to all mankind.

CHAPTER III

MIDSUMMER MOON

I

AT ABOUT five o'clock that afternoon a very pretty girl jumped out of a large touring car in the driveway of the Thurlow home and ran up the steps to the side door with every appearance of haste and agitation. In this case appearances were not deceiving, since she was alone and not behaving for any one's benefit; they were, moreover, altogether charming, owing to a heightened colour and a reckless, slightly dishevelled air. Seemingly her haste had lasted some time and brought her far from its point of origin; she had not changed her sport clothes after golf, and the steaming hood of the motor spoke of a callous disregard for speed laws. But inside the house, halfway up the stairs, she stopped, wheeled about, and ran down again, not pausing until she had traversed the empty front rooms and reached the pantry, where she almost knocked over Stella, the maid.

"Has any one been here, Stella?" she gasped.

"No, miss. Your mother——"

"Any one called?"

"Miss Hunter 'phoned about the picnic just a little while ago, Miss Helen. Asked if you would bring an extra dozen sandwiches. I told Susan and she's making them now. Mr. Bonant called up earlier and said he'd call again. Then some man 'phoned and wanted to know when you'd be back, but he didn't leave any message either."

"He didn't say who he was?"

"No, miss."

"You didn't know his voice?"

"Oh, no, miss! I never could tell their voices apart on the telephone."

"Did you tell him I'd be back soon?"

"I said I didn't know, Miss Helen."

"Oh, *Stella!* How many times have I told you to get the name? And *never* say you don't know when I'll be back. Anything's better than that! Say you expect me any time, or that I'll certainly be back by such a time, or—— Darn it all! Never mind, Stella, it's not your fault. I'll be up in my room if any one calls again."

On the stairs she smoothed her disordered brown hair and said rather irritably: "I wish I'd never started that second nine!" But the next moment she remembered that it was during the second nine she had run across Patricia Young, who had said almost at once: "I hear your heavy suitor's just got back." (It might have been the plural, but Helen was not deceived.) Patricia, it appeared, had seen someone who had seen the Wilkinsons driving out Broad Street; and, of course, Gobie hadn't come without Stuart.

"Yes, he wrote me he was coming to-day." Even Patricia, with her uncanny faculty of unmasking a bluff, hadn't been able to tell whether it was true.

In her room, within the space of twenty minutes, Helen achieved a bath, a change into another and quite immaculate set of sport clothes, and a minutely thorough toilette which embodied that secret of feminine success—careful preparation, and perfect naturalness artificially attained. Her complexion was perfect, and one would have sworn nothing had been added to it, so nice was that falling short of perfection which is perfection itself. She looked exquisitely fresh and capable and composed. More alluring, perhaps more likely to incite rash words and rasher actions under a summer moon—but certainly no prettier than when she had entered the house, panting and with flushed, hot cheeks, hair "blown to pieces," and darkening eyes.

She was of medium height, and her slender, supple body appeared even more girlish now, at twenty-three, than when her skirts had first been lengthened to conceal her very noticeable and well-shaped legs. (The Age of Concealment had not yet declined in 1914.) At the other extremity there was a great deal of wavy, light-brown hair worn loosely coiled, and making her oval face seem smaller than it was—a touch of dignity to restrain the vivacious mobility of the face, with its disconcerting blue eyes and slightly upturned nose. Extraordinarily direct eyes, at once limpid and brilliant; and about the face, something of the adorable sauciness of a precocious puppy.

Statistics: Four years at boarding school. One year at college. Two years at home.

Within five years she had turned down three serious and carefully rehearsed proposals, a dozen impromptu ones (est.), and been engaged, quite informally and without announcement, three times.

Duration of these engagements: from twelve hours to six weeks.

Number of times in love: indeterminate. Continuously, with intermittent lapses, since the age of fifteen.

II

The doorbell rang once—a loud, imperious ring. She gave her nose a final dab, and walked out of the room in the grand manner, with the dignity of a duchess.

It was Gobie, hat in hand, standing at the foot of the front stairs. When she recognized him she ran down the steps as lightly as a swallow, with a charming impulsiveness, and seized his hand.

"I was hoping it was you! Gobie, you're looking wonderful." There was a smile like a caress, a certain breathlessness. "It's so nice to have you back!"

Now the remarkable thing about the first of these statements was not its inaccuracy, which Gobie had no way of suspecting,

but the fact that for the moment its professor believed it true. Strictly speaking, it was not at all insincere. During that brief moment she simply forgot about Stuart, was genuinely delighted that the other had come—while he suppressed an irrelevant desire to kiss her. In such wise did Helen's greetings affect young men.

"Was it you who called up and wouldn't leave a message? You know, Gobie, I had a hunch it was. Pat said someone had seen you driving home, so when I got back—we were out playing golf, and Stella said someone had called—you see? Let's sit down. . . . *Goodness*, but you're tanned! Now, tell me all about everything. Did you hear about our picnic to-night? Phil's getting it up, Phil and Ann; you *must* come. I thought you and Stu would never get back—it seems *ages* since you left. You must have had a wonderful time; I'm dying to hear about it."

That was Gobie's opportunity; she was out of breath.

"We did have a great time," he began. "The boat race——"

"Oh, I *wish* I could have gone on for it! I was thrilled to death when I heard. But you see Frances was here with the children, and I simply couldn't. I was nurse girl for two weeks, Gobie! Can you imagine it? But I loved it, really I did. Anyway, it was a whole lot better I didn't go—if I had, Stu would have missed the house party. Was it awfully nice?"

"It was. All the same, we both wished you had come on."

"It's nice of you to say it. Did they—were the girls attractive?"

He smiled at the naïve anxiety behind the question. "Yes," he replied judicially. "All good, and one very good. Not that you would have had anything to fear, however. When it comes to competition——"

She didn't let him finish. "I don't believe it," she declared with a sigh. There was a slight pause. "And you never wrote me a line!"

"You didn't expect anything like that, did you? People who

live in glass houses, you know . . ." He laughed good-naturedly. "If I remember correctly, the last time I saw your precious and illegible handwriting was in 1912. Am I right? A four-page thank-you note for some flowers, in which you thanked me very formally in six different ways—and said nothing else! Quite a model of its kind. Now, don't look at me that way!—You make me feel . . . Anyway, I'll take that back about your handwriting. I have seen it, of course, though only on envelopes addressed to someone else."

"I send my letters—such as they are—where they're appreciated."

"You certainly do! Appreciation—Lord, what an inadequate word. The way that man tears through Yale station for his mail! But, anyway——" He had laughed maliciously, and paused to observe the effect of his thrust. But she was too wise to show her curiosity. "You haven't said whether you're going on the picnic," she prompted him.

"I suppose I am. Is Stu?"

A shrug: "Don't ask me! I haven't seen him."

That was what he had been waiting for. Nevertheless, he was surprised. "But he spoke as if he were coming here this afternoon."

That was what she had been waiting for. Her feigned surprise was perfect—he had no idea of her inward rejoicing. "He surely won't leave his mother so soon—the first day home."

"I left mine."

"Yes, but——" a pause.

"You don't think I care less about mine than he does about his?"

"Certainly not. You know what I mean. Yours is very different from his—that's all."

Then she regretted saying so much.

"I assure you Stu has plenty of liberty," he said thoughtfully.

"I didn't say he hadn't. Oh, Gobie, how did we ever get on such a subject? Here you've just gotten home, and instead of

telling me what you've been doing and all about yourself we go discussing something that—that's entirely beside the point!" He was laughing very heartily, and it vexed her. "Why do you want to tease me? It's perfectly horrid to laugh. I wanted to talk—to—to visit with you, and you're spoiling everything!" She stood up suddenly, pink with anger, and stamped her foot. "Gobie Wilkinson—I—you're making fun of me!"

At once he was on his feet; his face was serious. "No, Helen, I swear! Anything but that." There was such an intensity in his manner, as he advanced toward her, that she was alarmed. A clairvoyance suddenly broke upon her; better than he himself, far better, she understood the feeling underlying that protest. And Gobie, of all people! Gobie, whom she had thought cured long ago, whom she wanted only as a friend. . . .

"I'm sorry. It was silly of me—to get peeved." She kept her distance, while he stared at her, trying to find words. "Now, let's sit down and talk. There's so much I want to ask you." She spoke nervously, tumbling the words out; then suddenly brightened. "But first let's call up Stu. He may not have been asked on the picnic—you know. I imagine he hasn't heard. We ought to call up Phil and tell him, don't you think? For that matter I don't suppose they know you're coming. The more the merrier! Now—come on, help me—that's a dear! I was going with Paul, but we can all go together in the big car."

It was not the first time she had handled high-voltage successfully.

But while they stood in the 'phone booth and he talked to Phil, she felt unhappy. That manner of Gobie's a moment before—was it a true revelation, or had her intuition been mistaken? She alternated between an inclination to dismiss the episode as absurd, and a feeling that it wasn't meaningless and that she had somehow been to blame. Her mother was always accusing her of "leading the men on," and perhaps she had been guilty of that most heinous sin with Gobie; though how or where the

enticing process had begun, she was at a loss to know. It was abominable to make men suffer, she thought, and she was tired of having them fall in love with her, and of feeling afterward that it was her fault. Abominable. Unless, of course, you happened to like the man more than a little, in which case it was rather pleasant. . . . With this reflection she ceased worrying about the boy at her side, who seemed altogether too normal, now, to worry about, and began to wonder why Stuart hadn't come.

III

Stuart was in the garden when the call came. That it should have come at that precise moment was one of those accidents called providence, quite logically motivated yet mysterious in their coincidence, which sometimes very kindly intervene to cut a Gordian knot. In this instance the knotty problem was whether he should assume a tactical offensive by rushing headlong to the Thurlows', or await developments; and it is quite possible he might have weakened in favour of the former had not the choice been made for him.

At first it had been merely a question of how to play his cards. Doubtless under other circumstances that question would not have occurred to him, for he was commonly as undesigning as most of his sex at twenty-two. Experience, however, had not failed as a teacher where Helen was concerned. He knew, if he stopped to think at all, that anything approaching open wooing was a mistake with her; that undisguised ardour threw her on the defensive, and that her defensive could be maddening and cruel in its capricious resourcefulness. To combine pursuit and neglect in exactly the right proportions was the solution, as his quick intelligence had long ago understood—how to arrive at it was another matter. He had repeatedly failed, very lamentably, and had come to consider himself a poor dissembler—which he was—and the problem as insoluble—which it always appears when youth is very much in love.

So on his way to the garage, some time after five o'clock, his desire to see Helen had struggled with the knowledge that it would be wiser not to go. It was still early. . . . Perhaps the garden, through which his path lay, contributed to his indecision; for there was something arresting in its placid beauty, a force which deflected his straightforward impulse into reflective channels. He sat down on a marble bench in a corner overgrown with sweetbriar and columbine, and regarded with lazy appreciation a vista of rose bushes and the distant beds of foxgloves and petunias through the gate leading to the smaller walled flower garden; stared pensively at the sunken pool before him, with its water-lilies and trickling fountain, and the presiding deity of the garden wall—a weather-stained Pan in a niche grown with ivy. It was a delightful place at any time, but to-day and at this hour he thought it possessed an especial enchantment, a charm augmented and intimate. Over the tops of the oak trees across the road the late sun hovered like a blood-red stain, a blinding brilliance whose outer radiations were blotted and diffused and softened into orange and purple gold by the pale blue wash of the sky; and in the upper windows of the house glass and sunlight met on the same plane and blazed in glory like a mystical crimson bonfire. A tepid, scented breeze drifted across the garden, stirring the rose trees and blowing languid petals at his feet; the orderly rows of gladiolus and the larkspur against the wall were bathed in an aureole light which gave them brighter hues; while the nearby presence of a honeysuckle stole upon his sense with a sweet, a cloying fragrance. And gradually the loveliness blended into his mood, and the earlier doubts about his going gave way to another and more absorbing question—the final definition of his hopes for the future.

These were easily stated: a year from now he would graduate, and some time thereafter, provided Helen would have him, the wedding. That consummation was remote and difficult enough, he thought, to serve as fabric for his dreams and ambitions, to

demand all his intelligence and all his unswerving loyalty of purpose. There was no belittling the enormously difficult task of winning her, it seemed to him, nor any blinking the probable opposition of his mother; though the latter difficulty shrank to minor proportions beside the enigma that was Helen Thurlow. His mother was his mother; she could be won. He could overcome any obstacle if Helen would have him! The world was laid out for successful lovers, and given that success he could face the universe with the boundless confidence of a Tamburlaine.

There was a growing belief among his class and generation that early marriage was a good thing for rich young men. Stuart thought so, with that warmth with which mankind always endows beliefs in harmony with its desires. His mother was at least neutral to the idea in the abstract, her inclination to keep him single being nearly counterbalanced by her conviction that he ought to "settle down." And lastly, there was the atmosphere of his school and college, where young men already felt life to be a serious matter, pursued their athletics, their managerships, selected their cronies and aspired to their societies with a naïve but zealous consciousness of "preparation." It was characteristic of the atmosphere, which was an almost perfect microcosm to the American macrocosm, that scholarship was at worst an eccentricity, at best a means toward the greater end of eminence. How inevitable that one who had competed in the preliminary college race for success should enter the lists early in the main event. How natural that marriage—the right sort of marriage, *bien entendu*—should loom up early, not merely as a prize, but as the proper thing, a "steadying influence" that the runner might sprint faster. Yet what else were young men to do after college, if they had ambition and spurned the primrose path of dalliance?

Stuart asked himself the question now, and for not the first time wondered whether "settling down" were the only answer. That prospect, considered impersonally and apart from the girl

he loved, was a little frightening; for he was mature enough to apprehend, albeit dimly, its responsibilities and the finality of its choice. Yet the only alternatives appeared to be further study for a profession, possibly the law (since he had no taste for technical or academic work); or a somewhat protracted period of loafing and pleasure-hunting abroad, charitably known as acquiring culture and experience. Or dilettantism of one kind or another, starting as a pastime, ending usually in the habit of futility. One or the other was the fate of America's heirs to fortune, in a land where wealth and education disqualified their possessors from government, where leisure was a reproach, and where, to escape sheer *ennui*, young men of energy whose aptitudes ran to nothing so abnormal as art or dissipation, plunged desperately into the fevered rut of business and the making of more money.

Money was the last thing Stuart needed or desired. But like so many others, rich or poor, he sought an occupation wherein he could realize his individuality and express what ability he had in terms of his own achievement. At twenty-two his egotism was surely pardonable; he felt that he could accomplish big things in his own right, that he possessed energy and intelligence enough, provided the work he chose would call them forth. And what work was there to choose other than some form of business? He had no special training, only what was called a liberal education; he didn't want special training. An engineer, a chemist, a medical man—all sold their souls to the devil of specialization: that was the modern significance of the Faust legend. Business was almost as narrowing, but at least it afforded one, thought Stuart, an occasional glimpse of wider horizons, of the open sky.

Business, then, it would be—just what business he couldn't say. It seemed as if all his planning brought him back in the same circle to the same indecision. There were, of course, the family interests; the brewery had been sold (to his great relief), but the drop-forgings plant had grown to goodly proportions,

while the other holdings were sufficiently extensive to afford him a wide choice. The mere management of the money which would soon be his offered an occupation. His money or his stock certificates would open doors to responsible positions; but his pride was offended by the cognizance of his own capacity being negligible beside the power he had inherited. Still, he wanted responsibility, be the terms what they might. The sensible thing was to swallow his pride and take what was at hand—which was all he could decide at present, except that he would, of course, live in Columbus and settle down to business soon after he got his degree. And the first step of the settling process was to find a wife and a home of his own.

He started up at this point, and having forgotten his intention not to see her, turned down the garden path leading to the garage. It was at that instant that the butler overtook him, summoning him to the telephone.

At first it was only Gobie. Someone was getting up a picnic . . . he couldn't go, he was having dinner with his mother. "Hold the 'phone a moment, Stu," the voice had enjoined. And then to his surprise he heard Helen's silver-clear tones in the receiver.

It was a matter-of-fact conversation if ever there was such—an exchange of hellos and commonplace inquiries—yet Stuart felt a weakness about the knees and a dizziness in his brain when she asked him to come. Extraordinary how the voice brought her vivid presence to him—the colour and music of it, the laugh, the little inflections which stamped it as different from all other voices in the world. It was an animate current infusing itself into his mind, his blood—making his hesitations and sagacious schemes a mockery—and still he held fast! "I promised Mother the evening of my first day home," he said.

And again she surprised him. "I think it's very nice of you to do that, Stu. We'll all miss you on the picnic, but I understand how it is—and you're quite right."

He stammered: "Don't praise me for something I don't want to do. I'd much rather come! Couldn't I meet you somewhere later on?"

Weakness, weakness! But that was better than being a stiff-necked prig when such a girl asked you to see her.

"We're going somewhere to dance later. Maybe the club——"

"Anywhere you say. I can leave by ten or sooner. Do you think you'll go to the club?"

"To tell the truth I don't know where we'll go. It's up to Phil—it's his party. But we'll all want to see you. . . . Well, I'll be with Paul and Gobie. We'll meet you there at ten."

He took the front stairs three at a time, heading for his room. He would see her, after all—and hadn't he managed the whole thing rather well! Just about perfectly. . . . And he had succeeded in sticking to his guns—not altogether, but in the main; though it was a close shave. Whew! It was a miracle how he had stuck to his guns. Being human and a male, it scarcely occurred to him to credit Helen with a share in the "perfect" arrangement. He was quite incapable of conceiving how she had set her heart on seeing him, or how determined she had been to take him away from her only rival, his mother. . . .

He was jubilant. He would see her! An excellent idea, to dress for dinner and then go over to the club, with a subtle reminder to those intruders—Paul and Gobie—that he had turned down their picnic to dine in lordly state with his mother! "And Mother will be tickled pink," he chuckled aloud. "Think I've seen the light at last, realize what's due to our position and all that. Evans, you're an old fox. Ha, ha! Crafty. A mean talker on the telephone. . . . You big moon-struck giraffe!"

Then, while shaving, he suddenly remembered that there probably would be a moon that night, a great full yellow moon rising at the end of the river, bathing the picnickers in a flood

of argent magic while he sat gossiping and playing double solitaire with his mother; and in his perturbation he almost shaved off the right, and more luxuriant, side of his moustache.

IV

Dinner lasted hours. There was an especial elaboration of courses, at least five or six, which seemed double that to Stuart; there was some excellent champagne, served in honour of his homecoming, with a languishing conversation before the glasses were filled and a quantity of pleasant confidences after they were emptied. There were two butlers, a great deal of electric light, a resplendent array of the best plate and china which would have done honour to a window in Tiffany's, an imposing Germania in pink and gold, and a tall young man opposite who thought it very good to be home. They both grew expansive. . . . Once he reached over with his long arm and patted her diamond-studded hand.

"You were a peach to give up everything this summer," he told her earnestly.

"Give up *what*, my dear boy?" she injected suddenly, while he made a magnificent sweep of his hand.

"Why, giving up Switzerland, and letting me come back to go to school in the East, and everything—— Oh, a lot of things. . . ."

"My dear," she began, immensely moved; and then paused: "Just a little more champagne, Gruener, just a tiny bit—there! Did I tell you about how perfectly furious the Governor's wife was? And Mrs. Batterson-Smith—— Don't forget, Gruener, the special Chartreuse with the coffee—and bring some Curaçao, too.—Well, it's been the talk of the town. I told you that? Your new dinner coat fits you very well, my dear boy. Oh, but it's been beastly hot! Now I thought when we have the dance we would take out the glass doors between the upstairs sunroom and the ballroom, so as to have the whole wing open—and put

in fans of course; then there ought to be a very good draught. The orchestra can go at the end of the sunroom.—No, no more champagne, but you can have some more, Stuart, go ahead.—Where was I? Oh, the orchestra! They're asking six hundred dollars to come from Pittsburgh, with all expenses besides! Isn't it awful? I told them they were robbers, absolute robbers! I couldn't help thinking of the ball Pappa gave for me when I came out. . . . Poor Pappa! He never got over it when the bills came in and they charged him seventy-five dollars for music. It was very good, too. . . . I remember the harpist as if it were yesterday. A big man by the name of Schwartz——"

"Are you getting the full twelve pieces?"

"Yes, and you know—it did me a lot of good! I got them away from one of the richest families in Pittsburgh. Steel barons! They wanted them for the same night, and I wired at once, saying it was imperative and for them to name their price—within reason, of course. You've got to pay for things in this world. Well, the Pittsburgh people had their choice of taking the second orchestra or changing the night—and they changed. Humph! Spirella wasn't going to turn *me* down, steel baron or no steel baron, with the prestige of a party here twice a year. I talked turkey to him last Christmas, and it had its effect! Anyway, the Pittsburgh people were mere *parvenus*, for all their money. My dear boy, when you look around and see these families that have sprung up overnight from *nothing*, it makes you feel like holding up your head!"

They left the table at last, amid an animated discussion of where the punch-bowl arbour should be placed and whether supper should be served in the dining room or on the terrace by the garden. A butler set up a card table in the library, which opened on the terrace and from which the summer moonlight was visible, beyond the open French doors, sifting through the trees and falling in luminous pools and patches of silver on the lawn. The heavy, sensuous perfume of roses filled the room—

masses of red and yellow roses in vases of Chinese porcelain. "A gorgeous night," Stuart mused, sipping his coffee.

"Yes, but frightfully warm," his mother returned. "You know, I think your idea of having supper on the terrace is all right. No one else in Columbus has a terrace like this, and with the heat——"

"Isn't it more the inward glow?" he teased, with a faint smile; but she didn't understand. "The Chartreuse," he explained. "Burns all the way down. All the same, Mother, you were a peach to keep the house open when you detest hot weather so much. I certainly appreciate it."

"Oh, that's nothing!" She shuffled her cards with furious concentration. "These decks are soiled—won't you ring for Gruener and tell him? No, don't bother to look yourself—it's his business! You have to keep after them all the time, they get so careless. Now, I thought we'd have Wilburforce do the decorating, and Price the catering." She went on, shuffling the cards as she talked, explaining how the ballroom was to be turned into a bower of roses, with painted trellises along the walls and a rose-shaded canopy over the ceiling; how the lights were to be hidden behind masses of flowers and the punch bowl set in an imitation fountain downstairs. "I'm not going to spare expense anywhere. They said last Christmas that no one in town had ever given such a party—I'd like to know what they'll say after this one!"

"How many do you think you'll have?"

She said, about two hundred; and for the first time he opposed her resolutely. Two hundred?—It was absurd, when the ballroom was jammed with thirty couples. "No use inviting every Tom, Dick, and Harry," he declared. "You're having just the young crowd, aren't you? Well, there're only about a dozen girls in town with any pep—I mean real first-raters. Leave out the children; get a raft of men, at least two for every girl—a good peppy stag-line that divides its time between the ballroom and the punch bowl, and you'll have a dance! That's the way

they do in the East. Every few feet someone cuts in, and the girls have a whirl, the men never get stuck, and a good time is had by *tout le monde.*"

"Well——" She wavered, and debated the matter as she laid out her cards. The idea had its attractions; Stuart's testimony made her proud of him and carried weight; and of course the party should be exclusive. But it did seem sinful extravagance to let so few enjoy it when you spent so much! Moreover, she felt obliged to come to the defence of her own sex: there were lots of nice girls in Columbus, it was ridiculous to say there were only a dozen with—what was it?—"pep." This college slang! . . . But then, Stuart did appear to be coming along nicely with his French. After a hasty survey of the possible field, during which Augusta championed certain débutantes whom Stuart unequivocally damned, and Stuart's own favourites were deprecated in favour of less promising material whose mothers were Augusta's friends, they struck a compromise, fixing the total at a hundred and twenty-five, of whom only fifty were to be girls.

"Now about the older people——" Stuart began tentatively.

"You needn't worry about that." There was a trace of tartness in her voice. "I'll have just a few of my friends to keep me company. There!—your king will play out . . ."

"I didn't mean that, Mother. Of course you want your friends." His smile was conciliatory, but his eyes had an anxious expression. "I was just wondering if this time you couldn't have—if you would mind having Uncle Arthur."

She sat up very straight at that, and a slow flush crept over her cheeks. "Stuart!" she exclaimed reproachfully. She held a card poised between thumb and forefinger; there was a pause. "No, my dear boy—no." She laid her pack down, and her eyes looked beyond him. "Don't ask me to do that. If it were necessary I would say yes; I wouldn't shrink from anything that was right. But it's not necessary. We never see him—I will

say he's been very decent about that. I don't—I . . . There's nothing I hold against him; it isn't that. But—no, I can't have him, Stuart."

She blew her nose in a tiny lace handkerchief, then began playing her cards again.

"He's the only close relative I've got, Mother."

She did not answer, but seemed the more engrossed in the game, playing with deliberation and her head bent forward.

"He's our only close relative and——"

"Not mine!"

"And I bear the same name. And he's always been—awfully decent to me."

Another pause.

"Have you any more cards that play up?" she demanded, almost angrily. "Then we're both through. Be sure you shuffle them well."

For answer he suddenly swept both decks aside, restraining her hand as she reached for them; and their eyes met in a brief mute struggle of opposing wills, hers with the old, hard, determined look; his for an instant glinting with the same steely gray. Immediately he regretted the action; one didn't treat his mother that way. But he had gone too far for retreat.

"Look here, Mother," he began. She was still rigid, and he seized her hand. "You've been wonderful to me; you've been a dear. I shouldn't ask you for anything when you've given me so much. But let me have him this time. You always liked him, didn't you? Wouldn't it be all right? He's never been anything but a friend to you."

"How do you know that?"

"You've said as much. It wasn't his fault that—that woman . . ."

"Oh! Stuart——'

She had slumped forward in her chair, her elbow on the table, her chin resting in her hand; and now she covered her eyes with her jewelled fingers, as if she were suddenly tired. "I—I don't

know," she said slowly. Of a sudden she raised her head, her eyes flashing. "Do you think I care now what he did or didn't do in that wretched business? I'm not so thin-skinned! I don't care *that*"—she snapped her fingers—"for what's happened in the past! If there were nothing but that I'd have Arthur here to-morrow; but——" She raised her hand, as if to ward off some invisible evil. "Let's not discuss it any more to-night. I won't say yes or no; I'll have to think it over." She gathered up her cards, and began methodically to shuffle them; the topic was closed.

They played one more game, in silence, each trying to appear absorbed; but it was a patent failure. "It's nine-thirty," he murmured as they finished, and pushed back his chair. "I'd better be starting for the club."

"You're joining the picnic party?" He nodded, and they rose together.

"Don't stay too late, my dear boy. To-morrow's another day. What? No, of course I don't mind. I have a number of things I wanted to do. Good-night."

"Good-night, Mother." He came up and kissed her roughly on the cheek. He wanted, in that moment of tenderness, to blurt out that he was sorry for having mentioned Uncle Arthur; but on second thought he wasn't sorry. "It's been great, having dinner together. Gee, but I feel peppy after that champagne! And the dance—your dance—no, *our* dance, isn't it?—it sounds wonderful. Good-night."

He ran up to his room, wishing to replenish his cigarette case before leaving, and make a final, secret inspection of his person. When he came down a little later he heard music coming from a distant room: the slow, sombre chords of the Adagio from a Beethoven sonata, which his mother played with a sure though not always subtle comprehension. So that's what she wanted to do, he mused, and paused for a moment on the threshold of the terrace, where he could see the moonlit garden, and the shadowy trees, and the white, lustrous roofs of garage and

greenhouse. There the music sounded very far away, indescribably sad, and passionate, and beautiful. He felt a sudden nostalgia . . . a great tenderness for his mother, a sense of the *douceur* and wonder of living. He loved her that moment for her very faults; or rather, the faults which he had seen so clearly before seemed now even beautiful, like the gaunt white boulders of a mountain stream by moonlight. Moonlight, and Beethoven . . .

V

The clubhouse, visible across the undulating golf links half a mile away, stood like a lonely and tenebrous island, fringed with dark blotches of trees and rising above the pale effulgence of the billowy fields and greens. The pale gold disk of the waning moon seemed to have floated down, down, immeasurably far, through luminous infinities of faded silver and blue, until it hung suspended very close, very still, and tenuously suspended in the bright air. Within the clubhouse a few scattered lights shone steadily, but the darkness of the ballroom, a long one-story wing on the side toward the road, showed only too plainly that the picnickers were not there. It seemed to Stuart an ideal place, a perfect night, for a tryst; and his pulses leapt as he raced down the winding drive, which flew noiselessly under the headlights of his car like a shining ribbon being wound dizzily on a spool. And before he could realize it the ribbon turned and broadened out into an open space—and he was there.

Only a few cars stood in the parking yard as he pulled up, and each was plainly outlined in the moonlight. Each was empty; none belonged to either Paul or Helen. He was disappointed, but a glance at his watch reassured him, as it still lacked five minutes of ten. After strolling about for a moment, he lit a cigarette and went into the clubhouse.

The hall and lounging rooms were empty, a drowsy attendant dozed in the office; but he heard voices coming from the grillroom. A languid curiosity led him to the door. The voices

came from a party of older men sitting at a nearby table, making merry with highballs and poker dice. The face of one looked slightly familiar; he nodded. Beyond, at the only other occupied table, there was a bridge game in progress, also accompanied by highballs, and as one of the players turned for his glass Stuart recognized him as his Uncle Arthur. At the same instant a cheery voice sounded, "Good work, Arthur!" and "How were honours?"—The hand was over. Stuart advanced toward the table; Arthur turned, saw him, and hastily rose. Then both were shaking hands very heartily, each a little shy, each very glad to see the other and aware that every eye in the room was focussed on them.

But Arthur was aware of it first—Arthur, with his histrionic sixth sense, his sense of a situation. Arthur was magnificent. . . . He might have been an elderly Horatio greeting the young Prince Hamlet, or an Antony welcoming the future Augustus to Rome. "Gentlemen, this is my nephew, Mr. Stuart Evans, of whom you have heard me speak—Stuart, this is Mr. McAllister, Mr. Miles, and Mr. Hermann"—thus said Arthur. Actually he said much more—implied it, conveyed it with an inflection, a gesture slight but magniloquent, a smile at once humorous, expansive, ironical, and sad. The inflection said: "Gentlemen, this is a delicate situation: I haven't seen my nephew for a long time, and I want him to think well of me. *Do* be careful." The smile said: "Stuart, these gentlemen have been drinking—drinking for some time, I fear. But after all, they're a good lot, quite harmless, and only very slightly drunk—so pray keep an open mind." And the gesture was a silent prayer—"Arthur, I hope you'll be very, *very* sober," said the gesture, and in addition it drew up a chair and lightly guided Stuart into it—the most affable and efficient gesture in the world.

Vain were protests!—"But really, Uncle Arthur! I don't want to interfere with your game. I can't stay, anyway—I'm meeting some friends——"

"You have met friends!" boomed Arthur, suddenly forgetting to be sober. "Oh, Charley! Where's our waiter, Mac? He was here a minute ago. As for the game, Stuart, we had just finished the rubber, so you see"—he steadied himself, beamed at the others—"you're right in the nick of time."

"Charley!" echoed the large fat man, known as "Mac."

"Tired of the game, anyway. Very confusing game, bridge." The swarthy, small man next to Arthur peered over gold-rimmed glasses precariously balanced on his nose, and sighed heavily. "Will you have a drink with us, young man?"

The fat man was indignant. "Don't call him young man, Will! Call him by his name. Nobody likes to be called *young man.*" He turned to Stuart with elaborate politeness. "Will you have a drink, Mr. Evans?"

"Charley!" bellowed the other.

"I can't stay but a minute, Mr. McAllister," Stuart said.

"Oh, that's all right—quite all right! Charley's very quick. You tell him what you want and presto, in the twinkling of an eye—— Oh, Charley!"

"Maybe he don't drink," suggested Will, with a mournful gaze over his eyeglasses.

That was too much for Arthur. "Will, you're out of order," he said scornfully. "Stuart is a Yale man—did you ever know one that wouldn't take a drink? He's a big man at Yale—baseball, track—all kinds of honours! He is—well——"

"No offense, Arthur, no offense. I'll apologize."

Arthur was quiet again. "It's my round, anyway. Charley—— Oh, here you are." He turned and regarded his nephew with intent anxiety. "What will you have, Stuart?"

Stuart hesitated—they were all watching him. A tiresome lot he thought them, all except his uncle, who provoked his sympathy and amusement alternately; and for a round of highballs and ineptitudes he risked keeping Helen waiting. But a refusal seemed worse than discourteous, it would be like tripping up a man who was fighting rather gallantly, if blindly,

against heavy odds; it offended his sense of fair play. "I'll take a Scotch," he said.

"Good for you!" Arthur canvassed the others, gave the order. "When did you get home, Stuart? College was out weeks ago, wasn't it? Used to let out in June when I went. And this is July——"

"I just got home to-day, Uncle Arthur. Gobie Wilkinson and I stayed for the boat race."

A light dawned on the fat man. "Boat races? I know all about 'em. Beat Princeton, didn't you?"

"No, they beat us—that was a couple of months ago."

"Well, you beat somebody, didn't you?" He was aggrieved.

"Mac, why don't you read the papers?" Arthur might have been gently reproving a child. "You claim to be a man of affairs, and you don't even know what's going on in the world! Don't you know about the regatta? Biggest boat race in the world!"

"Well, who *did* they beat?"

"You really don't know?"

"No, and you don't either, you big bluffer!"

"It was Cornell," Arthur airily replied.

Stuart was beginning to be glad he had stayed. The third man, Miles, who had hitherto been silent, now demanded a hearing. "Listen to Arthur, would you," he jeered. "They beat Harvard, of course."

McAllister triumphed: "See? Just what I contended *all* along."

"I believe he's right at that, Art," chimed in the small man.

"It was Harvard," Stuart answered gently, with a smile.

Arthur sought consolation in his glass, and the others followed suit. From the other table came a chorus of gusty laughter followed by an insinuating voice: "Did you ever hear the one about the fat lady and the travelling salesman?" Stuart glanced surreptitiously at his watch. It was a quarter past ten. Horror-stricken, he pushed back his chair.

There were the usual expostulations, the usual remonstrances; McAllister was effusive, and that failing, bullying; the man with glasses was lugubrious; but Arthur, after what struck Stuart as a sincere expression of regret, got to his feet. He raised his hand—raised two fingers in a papal blessing, ordained silence by his presence, basked in their befuddled attention. . . . "He's done us a great honour to stay this long"—he put his hand on Stuart's shoulder—"a great honour, Stuart, and a great pleasure. We owe you an apology for keeping you, and we owe one to your friends. . . . No, I won't say good-night just yet. I'll go to the door with you."

But in the empty hallway, when they were alone, Arthur seemed embarrassed. "I came out with you, Stuart, because—well, because I didn't want you to think——" He coughed, drew out a cigarette, and offered one to the young man.

"Think what, Uncle Arthur? I think you were a peach to let me butt into your bridge game." The whisky was beginning to glow pleasantly; he felt quite elated, quite master of the situation; felt a great liking for his uncle, too. "Won't you come out with me while I see if my friends are here?" Then he realized it would be awkward—particularly awkward, if the friends hadn't arrived.

"No," said Arthur. "I didn't want you to think—I mean, for Heaven's sake don't think I want to horn in before your friends. I just wanted to tell you"— he coughed again—"how much I appreciated your coming in like that, Stuart, and saying hello. You carried it off well, too.—Oh, don't say anything; I know it was a bore. Made me think of—— Well, you were damn decent, just as your father would have been."

Stuart bit his lip very hard.

"And don't ever think that's anything to be ashamed of! What I meant was—well, I hate snobs, and I hate your damned sniffling Puritans. Thank God, you're neither. Good-night."

Stuart watched him as he steered grandly down the hall. . . .

It was sweetly refreshing to be outside again. He walked

rapidly across to the parking yard and peered about. There was no new arrival in that moonlit open space, and he was sure he had heard none pass by under the grillroom windows. Therefore it startled him to hear Gobie's voice call out, as clearly as though the speaker were at his side: "Is that you, Stu?"

"Where are you?" he called back.

"Up here, under the trees." It was Helen, and he perceived their two figures—there was no sign of a third—sitting together in the front seat of Helen's car, an indistinct dark mass two hundred yards away.

"Why didn't you come inside and let me know?"

"Too lovely a night to come in," Helen answered. They had descended as he approached, and were coming up the drive.

Gobie began: "We just got here a few minutes ago——" but Helen's voice, very soft, broke in: "Do you think that's a nice way to meet us, when we left the picnic just to see you?"

He didn't answer, but covered the short remaining distance in swift, long strides, his eyes hypnotically fixed on her face. They shook hands—unnecessarily long, it seemed to Gobie.

"It's nice to have you back," Helen said simply.

"But I wish I'd known you were here——"

He was standing very close to her, his eyes unnaturally bright, and as she caught the odour of whisky she suddenly withdrew her hand and stepped back a pace. "Oh—I don't see that it mattered so much, under the circumstances," she replied coldly.

"How do you mean, Helen?"

For answer she turned deliberately and walked to Gobie's side. "If we're going to talk, let's get in my car—there's more room." Amid a silence she got in, Gobie helping her; then he stood aside, motioning for Stuart to follow, but she reached over for the other's hand and drew him up beside her. "Come on, Stu—get in. There's plenty of room for all of us." Her voice was sweetly matter-of-fact once more.

And Stuart did not understand. The thrill, the fervent joy he had felt a moment before at the first sound of her voice, at

the first view of her face, blanched and softened in the moonlight, at the nearness of her slim, virginal body clothed in white —that enchantment turned slowly into the most insidious and hateful of all emotions. Of course, it hadn't mattered, when she had Gobie with her in the glamorous dark under the trees! It was only too plain—they hadn't cared whether he ever came. And what a self-complacent fool he had been to think she had left the picnic for him! It was Gobie, of course; their indifference when he first met them confirmed it, the absence cf Paul stamped it as a certainty. He clenched his fists against the crushing realization, while Gobie, suddenly become animated, chatted with insufferable good-nature. Gobie was trying hard to ignore what had happened. It had been a bully picnic—Stuart should have come! And they had left a perfectly good dance to meet him, after the others had insisted on the dance hall at the Park, even Paul, who had taken a last-minute guest—an out-of-town girl who had dropped in on Ann Hunter at five that afternoon. To Stuart, every sentence carried a barbed undercurrent of significance.

"We're going back and join the others, aren't we?" he asked, to break an uncomfortable pause after Gobie's recital.

Helen stirred for the first time. "Do you want to?"

"It's up to you and Gobie."

"I don't care much about it," she answered listlessly.

Silence fell again.

Gobie began to hum a song:

"I want to linger
A little longer—
A little longer, Lou——"

He stopped abruptly, with a laugh. "Think I'll run in, before we go, and get some cigarettes."

"Don't be foolish," said Stuart, handing over his case. "I've got plenty."

"I don't like those you've got, Evans. Let me out."

"Stay where you are!" Confound it, one couldn't help liking Gobie—and it would be awkward if he left them.

Gobie sat back and lit a cigarette. Stuart wished he hadn't obeyed so readily.

All at once Helen leaned forward, and regarded Stuart with a curious and impersonal scrutiny. "Did you dress for us, or for the party at the club?" she asked.

"What party at the club?"

"The one in the grillroom."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Helen. I met my uncle there while waiting for you, if that's what you mean. It was pure accident, my running into him."

And then, to Stuart's astonishment, he felt Gobie's elbow sharply against his ribs.

"I also had a drink with him," he added. "That was the party."

A pause. Helen murmured irrelevantly: "I don't think I like the new moustache."

"I'm very sorry."

Gobie was composed.

Helen sighed. "I suppose I shouldn't have said that. My goodness, how difficult, how extremely *difficult* life is sometimes! Here we are; here we all sit, wrapped in gloom! But Stu gets first place—the head gloom. What *has* happened to us?" She threw back her head and laughed—the delicious, bubbling laugh Stuart had always loved—and sometimes dreaded. "Is it because we have two cars and have known each other so long we can't bear the thought of splitting up? That's easily settled. You two take the roadster to my house, and I'll follow in my car."

Stuart was very serious: "Nonsense, Helen. You and Gobie go ahead——"

"I love solitude."

Gobie said: "I'll drive Helen's car. You two go in the roadster——"

Then they all laughed—laughed uncontrollably, rocked together like marionettes on the same string. They were suddenly the best friends in the world. The moon—it was the biggest moon since creation, and the softest night since Troilus stood on the Trojan walls. Three was the ideal number when you were all squeezed like sardines into one seat, and the roadster—they'd leave it at home, of course, and go in Helen's Pierce! No, hold on! They'd leave the Pierce at home and go in the roadster, because its top was down, and who wanted a top overhead when there was such a moon?

Townward they sped, left the extra car at Helen's house and reunited; they were off again with the cut-out open, racing through the empty residential streets, out into the open country where the gale at forty miles an hour was cold and sweet, purging away all thought and sensation save the one of breathless, exhilarating speed. They rode for miles—rode in silence except once, when Gobie began to sing, and the others, catching the infection of the lilting air and sentimental words, joined in:

"I want to linger—
A little longer—
A little longer, Lou—
See that moon a-shinin' up above,—
There's no time like this for makin' love. . . ."

It was after midnight and a thirty-minute stop at a dairy lunchroom downtown when Stuart turned the roadster out Broad Street. Very soon they reached the block where stood the ancient brick pile of the Wilkinsons. "Let me out here, Stu," Gobie said. "It's late, and there's no use making an extra trip."

"Aren't you going to see me home?" Helen demurred.

"Why stand on ceremony? We know each other too well for that. You don't really mind, do you, Helen?"

"Nonsense, Gobie," said Stuart.

"Whoa! Stop here——"

Uncertainly, perhaps a little too quickly, Stuart slowed up. "You don't mind, Helen?"

Somewhat at a loss, she laughed; and taking her laugh as acquiescence, he slipped on to the running board. "Good-night, everybody," he said.

Helen's voice was dulcet music. "Good-night, Gobie. Thanks for taking me on the picnic—I've had a wonderful time." She leaned a little toward him and put her hand in his.

"Oh!" he said, "I have a notion——" and he suddenly stooped swiftly and kissed her on the cheek.

Then he was running down the shadowy walk. . . .

For a long minute, for a block after they had left him, neither spoke. Helen appeared profoundly thoughtful; Stuart stared grimly at the street ahead. "That wasn't at all like Gobie," she said at length.

He was gently ironical. "You are sure?"

"It was just pure deviltry. Like a mischievous little boy." She laughed, as if relieved; and there was such a wholesomeness, such a convincing common sense in her explanation that it restored his spirits like a tonic breeze from fresh, clean places. The stolen kiss, in retrospect, faded to the proportions of a harmless prank. It was much better to look ahead . . . which Stuart promptly did, making three engagements before they drew up at the Thurlow house. What a happy circumstance that Helen's golf game was really very good—and what a coincidence that Helen "wasn't doing anything" the next evening.

They stood before her front door, shaking hands, and whispering. . . . The porch was a sheltered place, hung with soft shadows, steeped with moonlit dusk. They breathed commonplaces with a tremulous earnestness, and their whispers gave them an awed feeling of being very close to each other, very solitary, the only two people in the living world. But she knew better than to linger with that witchery in the night, and moved toward the door he had thrown open.

"Good-night again, Stu," she whispered. "And, oh, one thing . . . forgive me for being cross when you first came."

"When were you ever cross?" he breathed.

"Oh, if you've forgotten!" She was vanishing into the darkness of the vestibule.

Then he did the natural thing . . . and having done it once, would have again—and again—so sweetly intoxicating was that first brief meeting with her lips, had she not slipped away and pushed the door between them.

"I don't like the moustache," she whispered; and the door closed softly.

VI

He lay awake for hours—deliriously happy, recapturing every moment of the ride. And then, it seemed quite suddenly, he was conscious of having slept, a sweet soft sleep that had flowed like a deep river from restless streams of wakefulness, that had begun he knew not when. Sleep that might have been an hour's fragment, or an eternity of peace. For a moment he had the illusion that he still slept . . . this consciousness was a dream, this dawn but gray moonlight in the room. No. The familiar objects of the room—reality—dawn. . . .

He was very wide awake. That pain—he had been dreaming of his father, had wakened. . . .

It was his Uncle Arthur, of course, saying that about his father. "Damned decent, as your father would have been." Yes. He had dreamed of being somewhere with his father, very happy they were together. He must try to remember things like that, kinder images, not the ending. But with a murderess! That day he had found out. They might as well have tried to keep from him the knowledge of his father being gone. . . .

He summoned Helen. But it was a long time before he fell asleep again.

No one called him, and he overslept. It was nine-thirty, and his mother had been gone an hour, when he sat down to breakfast with the morning paper and his mail.

On top of the pile there was a large envelope addressed to him in his mother's hand; and quite unconcerned, he saved it until the last. He had finished breakfast before he took it up again. An engraved card fell out, with a pencilled enclosure:

STUART:

The invitations to the dance just came this morning. What do you think?

He glanced indifferently at the card—then sat up straight and whistled. Across the top his mother had written:

DEAR ARTHUR:

Please come and keep an old woman company. I still have some of your favourite champagne.

AUGUSTA.

CHAPTER IV

MIDSUMMER DANCE

I

EVEN now, when that golden summer of the war seems so far in the past, Stuart Evans sometimes wonders about that first night at home—wonders if things might not have turned out differently had Helen and he become engaged that night. To be sure, the speculation is founded on a doubtful premise—that Helen was ready to accept him. He believes the affirmative, and since it doesn't matter now save for the other question, will doubtless go on believing it as long as he lives.

They did not become engaged—not at once; and the glorious summer days slipped into weeks, days and weeks of which they spent the greater part together, each pretending that nothing had happened, each conscious that something very important had happened and that the hour of decision was at hand. Perhaps both dreaded it a little; perhaps both were a little afraid of themselves. To Helen it was sweetly pleasant to drift along, secretly loving Stuart and enjoying their tranquil comradeship, without thought of sex, without having to renounce the attentions of other men, without sacrificing that precious feminine prerogative, the right to change her mind. The time of her girlhood, that time of independence and power over men which a woman cherishes as a man exults in his first pristine vigour, she knew would be over soon enough—there was no hurry. And on his side Stuart felt the normal male temerity before proposing, sometimes doubting his chance of success and always hoping that, as he delayed, his mother might grow more reconciled to his choice.

During those two weeks Gobie was with them a great deal. If he suspected how close they were to an understanding, the suspicion was allayed by their casual behaviour toward each other and their readiness to include him in what appeared the old *status quo*. With greater experience, he might have detected a subtle change in Helen's attitude toward him. But it was too deep below the unaltered surface; and Stuart's resolute effort to conquer all jealousy of his friend succeeded only too well. Signs of warning Gobie might have found . . . yet he was twenty-two, and Helen's kindness possessed unguent properties to efface all other impressions.

Perhaps, too, she was a little more gracious, a little gentler toward him than ever before, knowing how soon she must lose him, perhaps feeling an instinctive compassion at times, when her intuition told her he cared. And surely her happiness gave her a fuller and more perfect bloom. She had never been so lovely, so compelling; for every morning she awoke to a world wonderfully remade, to a permeating consciousness of joy like the sap mounting in a tree that had burst its buds into blossom.

For the dozen or so young people of about the same age that made up "their crowd"—Helen's and Stuart's and Gobie's—that July of 1914 was a little gayer, a little more carefree and replete with dances and parties, than any July had ever been. The days were a succession of golf matches, tennis matches, swimming parties; the nights—a time for delicious rest—began invariably after midnight, and the preceding hours were the evening. The evenings were scarcely less strenuous than the afternoons. Everyone danced countless miles during those evenings; everyone ate a little and danced a great deal at the dinners (the dinner-dance was new)—everyone talked a great deal, laughed a great deal, and flirted not a little. The "crowd" had never had a better time.

And because the latter end of the month would signal the beginning of the Great Trek toward the Michigan Lakes, the

Adirondacks, and the Eastern seaboard—because, indeed, the exodus for many families had been postponed at news of it—because, lastly, of its intrinsic merit, the Great Dance given by Augusta Evans (née Moldenhauer) on the fifteenth acquired a quite majestic significance. It was like the end of Court.

At nine-thirty on the evening of the fifteenth, Helen sat in a large, brilliantly lighted bedroom of the largest house in town, happily chatting with half-a-dozen of her compeers, appraising the gowns of twenty others, and principally—for the other activities did not interfere—studying the effect of two large corsage bouquets at her waist. The smaller was of violets, from Gobie, who at that moment was waiting in the hall to take her downstairs; the other, an enormous spray of orchids and gardenias, had just been taken out of its box and still bore Stuart's card. Unquestionably the orchids went better with her pale blue gown—yet she had put on the violets before Gobie called for her, and had carried the other box without explanation. It was plainly impossible to wear both. Great excitement, and considerable gratuitous advice, surrounded her. Word was spreading like wildfire that the line to meet the hostess and her son had already formed, and a mild commotion ensued, caused by congestion at the door opening on the long upstairs hall. Helen decided abruptly to restore the violets to their former proud position, and as she moved to the door, carrying Stuart's bouquet in her hand, new arrivals kept crowding in, eager and excited girls whose heads supported airy veils of net or tulle, in wraps and gowns as variously coloured as the groups in a florist's window. "The music's just started!" cried one, thereby creating a stampede; while muffled sounds arose from below and mingled with such bird notes as, "Oh, Dolly, help me with this slipper!"—"My dear, did you ever see such a bathroom?"—and "Who's got my lipstick?" This continued for half an hour, as the number of silk capes heaped over beds and tables multiplied, and the chatter increased, and the moving groups filled the hall and the large main staircase to overflowing.

In the hall, amid a hubbub from all sides, Helen explained to Gobie about the orchids.

"But why didn't you wear them?" he protested, with a heightened colour which might have been due merely to the warmth and noise. "They're gorgeous, Helen! And they'd certainly look better with your gown."

"Perhaps," she assented, smiling up at him, her head bent toward the upraised orchids. "But I wanted to wear your violets, too."

He blurted out: "I wish I'd never sent them!"

And then she hurt him intensely, by not rebuking him, by merely saying: "If you feel that way I *will* change them"; and too quickly, far too eagerly he thought, she disappeared into the dressing room—returning with the orchids splendid at her waist, while she carried his modest corsage. Already it seemed to droop pitiably, as if self-conscious and ashamed.

They went downstairs in silence except for greetings to those who passed; and everyone else going up or down wore a triumphant and expectant air, as if to say: "Well, *I* got here, anyway, thank Heaven; and if I don't have the best time of my life it won't be my fault!" The girls' cheeks were flushed and their eyes sparkled—though whether the flush were real must be left to a half-dozen mirrors and the three busy maids in the dressing rooms; and the halls and drawing rooms resounded with laughter, with a happy *brou-ha-ha* of conversation, with the palpitating life which seemed the essence of the place. If there were serious or thoughtful faces among that less volatile element, the stags, they had not long to wait; the throng in the hall suddenly parted, making way for two butlers carrying a heavy libation to the punch-bowl arbour; whither, after a brief but decent interval, and with deliberate dignity, the more lonely of those spirits slipped away. A happy augury indeed—for how many Columbus dances could they remember of a like wet distinction—and wet with the best champagne!

Gobie, as he saw the flunkeys, thought: "That's where I ought

to go, and forget all about Helen. But Mother's here, and besides——" Besides, he didn't want to; and even had he so desired he couldn't have left the girl at his side—with her magnificent corsage, and the slender bunch of violets in her hand. . . . "But what *could* she have said?" he demanded of himself; though the question brought him no relief.

In the receiving line, as they approached Stuart and his mother, her nervous quickening had not escaped him, nor the look on Stuart's face as she came up, nor her cordiality toward Arthur Evans, whom she knew so slightly. It all fitted into a piece—a hard mosaic of ominous probabilities. "You two go ahead and dance," Stuart had urged them—a little too kindly. "I'd like the first with Helen, after I get this over with." Then Gobie had seen his host's eye fall on the violets, thence swiftly to the corsage—seen his smile of satisfaction. The rest was lost as he followed the procession, making way for new arrivals; and in a moment they had run across his mother, who was about to take her place at Augusta's side.

Enid had chatted with them for a moment, with a charming manner, at once shy and enthusiastic, toward Helen. "You look so pretty, dear," she told her; while she pressed her son's arm slightly, as if speech, with him, were a superfluous vehicle. Gobie felt very proud of her. With her mass of silver hair, her pale ascetic face, through which the colour flowed and subsided like the gleam through a rare, opaque vessel, her gentle eyes, and the slow, upright grace of her carriage, he thought she possessed the fine distinction of a portrait by one of the old masters.

"Your mother is so sweet," Helen said, as they started to dance.

She did not see how his face lighted up, for hers was averted.

"You know," she pursued, without giving him a chance to speak his gratitude, "I wonder how many people here realize what it means—that Uncle Arthur's standing beside Mrs. Evans."

He felt as if he had unexpectedly run against a wall; and in his state of nervous acerbity the fact of her referring thus familiarly to Stuart's uncle seemed darkly significant. "I hadn't thought about it," he returned shortly.

"I think it's splendid that they asked him."

The music quickened, changing into a coaxing and insinuating one-step; other couples swung past them, brushed against them, but they danced in silence. Someone approached to cut in, and suddenly angry at this interference, because it seemed to prove how helpless he was to hold her, how overwhelming were the odds against him, he deliberately led in the opposite direction. The stag followed; it was Paul Ransom. Helen was quite unconscious of the chase. "Isn't it a *wonderful* party?" she breathed ecstatically. He stopped her, and turned on Paul with a childish spleen which for all the world he could not have suppressed:

"Sorry, but we just started," he said icily. "I'm taking her back now so Stuart can dance with her."

Then he could have bitten out his tongue, so agonizing was the look of amazement they had turned on him, so bitter was his despair.

In the hallway, with the other couples crowding close, Helen broke the silence. "Why are you so cross?" she asked—but she looked away.

"I'm not cross." The words seemed to choke him.

"Is it because I didn't wear your violets?"

He burst out: "God, no!"

She stared blankly, then quickening her step, almost ran from him.

"It's because I didn't *know!*" he flung after her. . . .

She did not look at him again, not even when he followed her to Stuart's side, not even when Stuart led her away. . . .

She pushed the unpleasant picture out of her mind, and very soon the intoxication of all this splendid display, of the music, and her towering, boyish companion's delight in her, reasserted

its spell. She had never felt Stuart to be so lovable or so good-natured as to-night; and there was something touching in his simple happiness, his unconcealed air of measuring the success of his mother's lavish entertainment by the pleasure given the girl he held so lightly and carefully in his arms. Passion and jealousy were evil things, she thought; she might be happy with Stuart, who could be distressingly ardent at times, but never violent as Gobie had been. And to-night, more than at any time since those days when he had played baseball on the old grounds next door, he appealed to her imagination. His background, the house, the material luxury, all that he was heir to, seemed to her magnificent; and he was worthy of the heritage, with his courage and quiet strength and youth. Not a virtue but what she invested him with, nor an illusion but she wove into her dream, as they danced together.

Someone cut in, all too soon; but her obvious popularity with the stag-line—that final test of the evening—consoled her for his temporary loss. She was very happy. His mother, she reflected, had been more cordial than usual; perhaps she might in time grow to like her, or what was more important, subdue that latent hostility she had always divined. The presence of the uncle was a good omen. It all seemed complete, perfect—except for that ugly episode with Gobie. But Gobie had no right to spoil her happiness; she wouldn't think of him again. . . . Where had she left the violets? It didn't matter; she would find them.

An hour later came her first respite, when she retired to the dressing room to fix a slipper buckle. From a connecting bedroom, part of the suite given over to her sex, she heard a snatch of feminine conversation:

"My dear, he's perfectly mad about her!"

Helen pricked up her ears.

"Give me a drag of your cigarette . . . there! Charley told me there were several who've passed out already. Isn't it disgusting? They give the boys a lot of liquor and spoil the

dance. They say his mother drinks like a fish herself, so I suppose it's natural. . . . *Lousy* with diamonds. . . . Oh, my dear, the *worst* taste I've ever seen! Those magenta hangings with the blue rug . . ."

"Wallflowers!" Helen wanted to scream at them. Envious harpies, spitting at those whose hospitality they abused! She rushed out of the room, beside herself with indignation.

Perhaps her fury blinded her; she almost ran against a black-clothed figure descending the hall in the opposite direction. Instantly he recoiled, and a haggard face met hers: it was Gobie. She cried out his name.

But he was already hurrying down the hall, like a man drunk, or blind.

"Gobie! Come back. . . ." All the hurt revived within her, sounded in her voice.

He did not pause, but vanished through a distant door. She moved to follow him; then she saw her partner waiting by the stairs, his back turned. She walked slowly into the dressing room.

It angered her that her eyes were wet, that she wanted to cry. He had no right to make her feel like that! She dashed the tears out, fearful lest the despised gossipers discover her, and went over her face carefully before the mirror. She wasn't at all pretty, she thought, not at all; though perhaps once she had not been so displeasing. How could Stuart see anything in her?—Such a flighty, blundering person, always hurting someone. With careful precision she straightened the corsage and refurbished her toilette; cheeks, nose, lips, hair, and gown. When she went down again it was a less vivacious yet still radiant Helen, smiling and thoughtful.

II

"I think," said Arthur gently, "perhaps we'd better go back now."

It was very quiet in the garden—only an occasional brushing

sound as some bird wakened and stirred, only the singing of the crickets in the distant fields, and the faint music of the orchestra, ebbing, surging, plashing over them in waves now clear and soft, now barely audible. The moon, so bright a little while before, had gone behind a long, fissured silver cloud, and it was too dark to discern the lilies on the jet black surface of the pool. Gobie shivered as a cool draught drifted up from the ground; then, mechanically, as if Arthur's voice had just penetrated to him through folds and layers of reflection, he turned toward the house. . . .

Arthur had had a busy evening—indeed, what he had rather dreaded as a bore and gone to from a sense of duty, had already proved the reverse of his anticipations. There had been, first of all, that meeting with Augusta, who seemed surprisingly well-disposed and cordial; then the dancing, agreeable as a spectacle, but frightening in the obligations it imposed on an old bachelor who hadn't danced for years—although, if he did say it, he had waltzed a whole lot better than most men of his age, even with Augusta, who had never been light on her feet or any one else's. If they'd only continued playing waltzes and hadn't switched to this newfangled fox-trot and lame-ducking business that he simply couldn't get the hang of! Still, the youngsters looked rather well at it, and the music *did* get you. He thought, on the whole, he had enjoyed it. And the girls, two or three of them, *were* pretty, especially that little Thurlow whom Stuart seemed to fancy. . . . Well, the boy had good taste, and if he were as much like his father as he appeared, he'd have luck with 'em, as well!

The bridge, afterward, he couldn't vote so successful; he'd be d——d if he liked bridge with women! Happily it hadn't lasted long; and there was that hand where he had squeezed through with an extra trick on a double and redouble—just before Stuart came in and asked him to help out in the smoking room. Not that it was Arthur's idea of a good time to administer cold water and fresh air to a couple of youngsters—

perfect strangers, too—who had mixed champagne punch with whisky, and drawn a blank for their pains!—not a lark, exactly, but preferable to the bridge. Pshaw! they ought to have known better, especially at a dance; they didn't know how to drink any more, the young men nowadays. There was nothing for it but to put that one to bed, though the other, after a ten-minute walk in the garden, had seemed able to carry on. . . . It was during this walk that Arthur found Gobie, sitting very quietly beside the pool.

At first—so great is the power of association—Arthur merely thought him another victim of the punch-bowl; and after walking his charge back, now fairly steadied, had returned to the garden with a sense of enlarged responsibility. "Anything I can do, old man?" Arthur asked. Even when the other had looked up out of those dark, suffering eyes, so curiously sombre in the moonlight, Arthur misunderstood: thought, "Just deathly sick, poor devil!" And he added: "Better walk around a bit with me. You'll catch cold sitting there—and maybe we can find something to fix you up."

"I'm not drunk." The voice was strangely listless; the speaker raised his head, lowered it, and continued to sit absolutely still. Arthur hesitated, studying him. At length he asked: "Anything the matter?"

The silence which followed seemed to Arthur so long that he began to think the boy hadn't heard. "Anything . . . ?" he repeated.

Suddenly the voice came—a voice of sullen passion: "No! Please go."

Arthur moved away at once. "My mistake. I didn't mean to intrude," he said.

And then, before he had reached the gate, the boy was at his side. . . .

At what point of that stumbling, apologetic outburst did Arthur guess? . . . "I know you think it queer that I—should have come out here like this. It's just—well . . . I

found out something awhile ago; I can't explain about it, sir, but—it rather . . . It wasn't so much the thing itself as the fact I should have known it! Any fool might have known it—something any blind man could have seen! And I never—well, I did see it, too, once or twice, but somehow I couldn't believe . . . Then, on top of that, I had to make a damned fool of myself——"

And the older man thought of a time when he had been mentally crumpled-up like this boy; when he, too, had execrated himself, when life had tasted bitter because of the pain beneath; pain that seemed unbearable, and that still throbbed a little, sometimes, when he remembered. He felt very sorry for Gobie. . . .

They talked of a great many things. Time enough for supper later on; it was a buffet affair, anyway; they might walk around a little first. There was this trouble in the Balkans; something about an Austrian Crown Prince being murdered; rumblings from Vienna and Russia; threats of war. Arthur was full of it. . . . "I wonder sometimes, Gobie—suppose they should have a great war over there? Something like Napoleon all over again. And with those tremendous armies, and modern artillery . . . whole nations thrown into one battle, wiped out, perhaps. Gad, you can't conceive of it." And like everyone else that summer, they dismissed it briefly for fantastic pish-posh and the latest three-days' wonder of the press. Even Arthur didn't believe it; though it came handy to divert the boy's attention.

They talked of Stuart. "It would be a fine thing if he'd marry after college," Gobie said. Arthur added: "If he'd marry the right girl." Oh, most emphatically there was no doubt of *that*. . . . "The girl Stu will marry is—a very wonderful girl": indeed, Arthur had no trouble comprehending that she was a paragon. Quite innocently but none the less promptly, Arthur turned his companion away from that horizon; and being wise in anodynes, got him to talking of himself—almost to him-

self, it seemed after a little, so fervently did Gobie pour out his mind.

After college? Gobie didn't know. "I used to think I wanted to tackle something big," he said. "Like a steel mill, for example. You see, sir, everyone these days has so much money, and—well, we haven't much, and it seemed as if it mattered a good deal. At first, I mean. I can't put it very well; I don't mean just the idea of owning a lot of things and being able to do pretty much as you please. But—well, the way the whole thing sort of makes you feel awfully small and insignificant, no matter how sure you are that your own brain is as good as most—or even better than most. Not that I feel mine's better—don't think that! But I used to think that anything I could do at all—like writing, for example—was absolutely feeble and paltry—not only in itself, but compared to all the sheer *bigness* of everything about you—the bigness of college even, and the way it ignored you if you weren't awfully big yourself, or didn't have scads of money. Like New York—so awfully huge—just blind, prodigious size, not meaning anything—I don't know. Maybe it does mean something, too. But for example, the way you feel walking up Fifth Avenue. Did you ever feel that way, sir? Or is it just that I'm so egotistic that it—well, it sort of hurts to feel you're insignificant—just another piece of organism among all the other countless billions and billions, living and dying all the time . . ."

Later he asked: "What would you do, sir, in my place? I said I wanted something big: but I don't think so any more. I haven't much sense about practical things—I suppose. All I seem able to do better than the average is just put thoughts on paper—and those second-hand ones. And I don't put them particularly well, either. Somehow, they don't seem important beside all this bigness and bustle and continual—I don't know—this continual, vast, chaotic living all about you! Do you see what I mean, sir? I want to do something that my mind will believe in; that will be a part of the world that's always going on

and yet be a little outside of it, too, so that I won't feel all the time as if I were buried under some gigantic, immovable machine. If I weren't buried in it, maybe I could see its direction better, or even understand how it works. I know that sounds odd. . . ."

Clearly, Arthur thought, this wasn't a case like those young men who came asking one about the relative merits of the law and the insurance business—which offered the shortest path to reward, which was best suited to their peculiar talents of glibness and perseverance. Gobie was probably right about himself; he wasn't "practical." What counsel could Arthur volunteer, when the boy's own ideas seemed so nebulous and hopelessly in the air? Nothing but platitudes—kindly platitudes. And yet—all life, he thought, all these strange eternal questions like Gobie's, were only answerable that way. One always returned, in the end, to the experience of the race. And the questions still remained. . . .

He gave the usual, the obvious advice; Gobie should stick to his writing, acquire confidence; should, above all, be patient and make the most of his last year at college, without fretting his mind with questions which only time could clarify. None of it, he thought afterward, was very much to the point; and yet he didn't know, honestly, what else to say. Whether Gobie was disappointed or impressed it was impossible for Arthur to tell. But it seemed to him that he had done all he could. And so, the night having darkened with the opaquely hidden moon, they started slowly back toward the lights and music.

As Arthur preceded his companion through the garden gate, he saw a gleam of some soft light-coloured substance down a vista of shadowy rose trees, a wraith that seemed to float impalpably, to move, and stop, and sway, beside a tall dark shadow; that moved into a brighter space, and suddenly was blotted out —in the unconscionable second before Arthur turned away—by that familiar, tall figure of a young man; while the two shadows became one shadow.

Arthur's heart was in his mouth. Why should he feel that queer, choking tumult, that quick, vicarious stab of jealousy? Or that other sensation of profaning by a glance something which, unwitnessed, was innately beautiful?

But Gobie walked straight ahead, looking neither to the right nor left, his eyes fixed on the twinkling lights of the terrace.

CHAPTER V

CATACLYSM

THE Evanses, Stuart and Augusta, were on the Massachusetts coast when the war came. Only an event of such magnitude could have taken precedence over the impending visit of Stuart's fiancée.

Augusta had taken the private announcement of her son's engagement, if not with perfect grace, with at least a surprising equanimity. It was not altogether a coincidence that this announcement was made on the day following the dance. Everything the night before had gone off beautifully; everyone had said such nice things to her about its being the loveliest party they had ever seen; she was glad she had asked Arthur—though she wouldn't admit it; and Helen Thurlow had been so tactful and so dexterous in her compliments that Augusta was even disposed to concede, not that she had been mistaken in previous estimates, but that Helen had miraculously "improved." So they were engaged? Hm. . . . She frowned, and was silent for a long time, while Stuart bit his lip until it hurt. It would have been much simpler, easier perhaps, if there had been an explosion. There was nothing of the kind. Augusta merely kept thinking—it was at luncheon, and she attacked her salad with intense preoccupation—"Of course it had to come, when I let him stay here this summer—like a fool! Comes of his having been away so much, and seeing so little of girls. But I won't say anything; he's so strong-willed. Only there must be some way—later on. . . ." And aloud she said, finally: "I won't say I'm glad, because I'm not. But I suppose it's all right, if you love each other. As you say, I may

get to like her better." Then, after he had protested very earnestly that of course she would, and vowed that Helen was the sweetest girl in the world, and that none who knew her could help loving her, Augusta played her only remaining card:

"You'll promise me not to marry until you've finished college? That's my one condition, Stuart. Promise me."

He promised. After all, Helen had insisted on the same condition—though he had secretly hoped to dissuade her. (That last year of college, to which he had so looked forward, had become an appallingly desolate prospect during the last month.) But he recognized the justice of his mother's provision; and he would have agreed to any reasonable compliance to secure her consent, when her approbation was certainly not to be expected.

That night Augusta cried in bed. It gave her a curious sensation, akin to recovering an arm or limb from numbness; she hadn't cried for years. At first it was merely that she felt rather sorry for herself; it seemed she ought to cry just a little, out of obligation to her sense of personal injury. "He doesn't love me much," she thought. But at once her whole being revolted against such an intolerable idea. He did love her, she knew; only there was that girl, who would surely win him away, and then the long sterile years alone. Instead of weeping harder, as the vaguely desolate spectre of the future rose before her, she grew exasperated with her situation and herself. She wiped her eyes with an angry gesture, sat up. Bah! She was a fool to have cried. She wasn't beaten yet. . . .

A week elapsed—their last in Columbus—during which she was busy packing and making preparations to close the house, while Stuart was seldom home, and when he was, appeared in a blissful trance. Stuart was making the most of those last days, only too willing, she thought bitterly, to let her attend to all the tedious exigencies of departure as long as he might go his enamoured way. Only a week, and already that girl had wrapped him around her finger! Only a week, and he was neglecting his mother. Unwittingly she did him an injustice.

His neglect was less an accident than a deliberate incident of policy, as she might have perceived later, when she finally had him to herself again in their drawing room on the train, and being in good humour, allowed him to reopen the question of the engagement.

"You said, Mother"—thus he began after dinner—"you might get to like her better. Now, didn't you?"

"Suppose I did? That isn't saying I'm keen about her, Stuart—or ever will be."

"Of course you will. You won't be able to help it, once you know her. It's only a question of having her visit us, so you can get a chance to know her. She can't come before the middle of August, but I think you ought to ask her then."

Augusta felt hoist by her own petard. She came very near losing that self-control which, as she had told herself again and again during those night vigils when her problem recurred to her, was the only formula for dealing with the difficult months ahead. Something of the sort she had, of course, expected; but such cool arrogance! Where did the boy get this ruthlessness, this obstinate pursuit of an advantage? "You might have told me before," she grumbled. "You can't get up a house party on a moment's notice. And the house isn't large——"

"But I don't want a house party, Mother. That isn't the idea. I want you to see something of her without a lot of others being around. For a week, anyway. It's the least you can do, really, in fairness to both of us; make some attempt to know her. If you don't like her at the end of a couple of weeks——"

"You said one week, Stuart."

She invoked the proprieties. Such a visit would be tantamount to announcing the engagement; were Stuart and Helen prepared for that? She was too wise to imply that she herself was not. But after all, what harm would there be, as long as they had promised not to marry before next year, in making Helen the object of a little gossip? It suddenly struck her that it might be well to have the girl come on alone, embracing that

opportunity which Stuart urged of studying her closely; and by seeing the two together, illuminating the whole problem. She would not be fighting in the dark if she understood Helen's temperament; and if the girl were such a little flirt as report had it, if she did merely want the money, perhaps . . . That unfinished conjecture brought the smile which Stuart, watching anxiously, took for good-natured acquiescence. Augusta agreed to write as soon as they reached their destination. As for the term of the visit, there was no need arguing about a matter which, after all, was for Helen to determine. "Oh, of course, it's dreadfully hard for her, Mother—I mean the whole position," Stuart put in. "But you must make her feel that you like her, you know, and that you approve. You will, won't you, Mother dear?"

Augusta's jaw closed tightly. But she smiled.

The New York papers the next morning—it was July twenty-sixth—carried great headlines that Austria had found the Serbian reply unsatisfactory, and that a declaration of war by Vienna was believed imminent. Germany, it appeared, was squarely behind her ally; Russia and France stood by, watching the Austrian aggression with nervous amazement and apprehension. For the first time it became genuinely difficult to minimize the threat of a general conflagration. They talked about it intermittently all that morning, laying aside their books and magazines, which failed to amuse or even distract, and returning ever again to awed comment on the one tremendous topic. Perhaps after all, Augusta thought, it was just as well they hadn't gone to Switzerland. She naturally hoped for peace; the Kaiser, all Germany, she knew would work for peace; but there was this vast, perpetual menace of Russia and "revengeful" France confronting the Fatherland. Her years in Germany had left their ineradicable mark, more potent even than the appeal of blood, intensified by her temperamental inclination toward efficiency and order in the material mechan-

ization of life. Her century, in England as well as America, had been steeped in German influences; taught reverence for Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Wagner; and, in America at least, taught worship of the new. She applauded German economic and industrial achievement and regarded the German state as the perfection of society. This war had been brewing for years—didn't Stuart remember what the Herr Oberst had said to her when they were leaving Munich in 1912? If it came now, it would find Germany prepared—and what a revelation the world would have of German might and German superiority in War as well as Peace!

The thought inflamed her imagination. The dull, unhappy torpor into which Stuart's engagement had plunged her for days was sloughed off before her swelling conception of triumphant Germania enlightening the world. As the day wore on, as the succeeding days brought their portentous signals of the breaking storm, she became more and more excited, more and more reconciled to the war that was inevitable. Of how slight import appeared her small personal problem beside the spectacle of Armageddon! She wrote the note inviting Helen Thurlow with a jubilant confidence that everything would turn out well, with a feeling of certitude that she would conquer, as an individual will, just as the inspiring collective will of the great powerful German people would conquer Europe. Nor did it appear to her in the slightest degree inconsistent that she, like all those millions rushing in German troop-trains and marching German columns toward Belgium and France, should hail this righteous war of self-defence as the long-awaited opportunity to crush and consume the last remaining barriers to German domination, or at least supremacy, in that world which had once been Rome's.

On that fateful Saturday evening of August first, when the news came of Germany's declaration of war on Russia, Augusta ordered up champagne and drank a solemn toast to the success of the German arms.

Stuart could not share her enthusiasm. He could not even share, except with certain important qualifications, her passionate admiration for Germany. But for the most part he kept silence. With a few of his mother's opinions and prejudices he wholeheartedly agreed—that the Triple Entente was, in its *raison d'être*, no more righteous than the Triple Alliance; that the lambs of to-day had been yesterday's black sheep; that to the long course of intrigue, chauvinism, and national jealousies was due a portion of the guilt for this last and greatest crime—all this he believed: yet he shuddered at the present callousness of the German soul. To be sure the Germans were a wonderful people—perhaps, as his mother believed, the greatest people in Europe. He appreciated their literature and music, which he knew from old, and was ready to make obeisance before their science, their industry, and their genius for organization. But Germany appealed to him only in the abstract, as an amazing prodigy of endeavour, a marvellously intricate and efficient machine constructed out of humanity—as a place in which to live, never. When his mother revelled in her dream of a Europe Prussianized and uniform, he felt sick at heart. Surely France, Belgium, Russia, belonged, with their own rich civilizations, to the world. To see a swollen Germany arise from their ashes would be appalling.

Yet it seemed to him that between a choice of evils, a Germany moderately triumphant would be preferable to a Russia overrunning Germany. Such was the boy's first reaction, if he thought about the final outcome at all. He was confident, too, of the prowess of the German military machine; had not everyone heard for years that the German Army was the greatest in the world? Had not France and Russia proved their martial decadence, the one within the memory of his mother's generation, the other within his own? He was not alone among Americans in believing that there could be but one issue to such a war, nor in allowing his presentiment of that issue to mould in some degree his partisanship. Provided England remained neutral, the

struggle would be brief, spectacular, no doubt, and terribly decisive, with the "Prussian Policeman" left master of the Continent.

The invasion of Belgium stirred him less as a German crime than as a portent of the fate which awaited France. A broken pledge, to be sure; but what was all war in essence but a broken pledge? The little nations always paid the price of juxtaposition to the great, and European history taught a cynical lesson. What time was there to weep for Belgium, when the course of civilization was hourly shifting before their eyes?

When England declared war, Stuart heard his mother denounce "perfidious Albion" with a feeling of mingled sympathy and impatience. He had always admired England, believed in England; the fact of British participation resurrected all his first vague suspicions of German iniquity. If Britain stood with France, if the Entente powers buried their age-old animosities to side against the common foe, then the menace must be real indeed. Yet there was his mother's voice to challenge and disturb his faith in the motives of Downing Street. England, his mother furiously sneered, was trying to make the cause of despotic Russia a crusade of righteousness, and striking a moral attitude while preparing to dispose of her greatest rival. Stuart acknowledged the absence of historical basis for trusting the altruism of the imperial Anglo-Saxon. Germany and the Allies, he felt, were tarred with the same brush; the one issue between them was that of supremacy. A belligerent England confused that issue in his mind only in so far as she awakened doubts of German success; and because her decision would prolong the whole ghastly insanity, it was to be deplored. How was one, thought Stuart, to compound righteousness or justice out of this sinister shambles of ancient hatreds and modern rivalries?

Thus the boy's conflicting doubts and sympathies brought a degree of cynical bewilderment. The consciousness of the war hung over him daily like a volcanic cloud from some great crater

in eruption; it obscured the sun, it clogged the aërial pathways of the mind, it dimmed all the bright surface of reality with a grotesquely expanding distortion. He tried to withdraw into that small, personal, blissful world of Helen's and his creation, that world which only yesterday had been indifferent to aught else; but it seemed to have receded indefinitely into a remote and unreal past. When the letter finally came in which she promised to arrive for the first week of September, he hailed it as a promise of deliverance from a universe whose natural laws had been refuted and brought to mockery overnight.

II

If ever there was a carefully planned and scrupulously regulated visit, it was to be that one. Stuart did the planning. He flattered himself that the German General Staff itself prepared its offensives with no greater thoroughness or elaborate prevision of all possible contingencies, eventualities, and *bouleversements*, than he this private and consummately delicate enterprise. Not for nothing had he lain awake, and pondered and cogitated and dwelt in the imminent future, those nights before she came.

His strategy pursued a dual objective. In the first place, he must make his mother appreciate Helen as an exceptional girl, a brilliantly gifted girl; and in the second, he must, while giving Helen a chance to win his mother's liking and esteem, contrive to keep them apart a major portion of the time. Anything resembling an immediate intimacy between them he realized was quite impossible. Moreover, women so unlike and belonging to different generations—almost different worlds—women in their respective situations, could hardly be expected to survive the strain of any elbow-to-elbow association for the protracted period of a week. No, he certainly didn't intend to leave them together very often . . . and besides, what was the use of having a fiancée visit you if you didn't see something of her yourself?

It followed that the week should be taken up with engagements of one kind or another, and that no single hour should be left unaccounted for. A judicious programme of small parties interspersed with recreations *à deux*, such as tennis, sailing, and golf twosomes, was the thing; the mornings he would reserve religiously to Helen and himself—perpaps some of the afternoons as well; taking care that the evenings should be enlivened with one or two dinner parties, at least one dance, one or two sessions of bridge—in short, that those hours they spent with his mother should be graced with other presences and inoculated with potent diversions against tedium and its twin sister, discord. That the sentiment underlying this planning failed to do justice to his mother's ability as a hostess scarcely occurred to him. The matter of "entertaining" Helen seemed peculiarly his province and prerogative, and he felt the same pride in sponsoring the visit as a stage manager in the début of his brightest star.

However, it was essential to secure his mother's full cooperation and to interest her, if possible, as a minor partner in the venture. Augusta, of course, would give the dinner parties; she ought also to give—Stuart conceived it with a shuddering but manly resolution—some sort of "tea fight" for Helen at which the child might be formally presented to the society of the place. Or a party on the gasoline yacht, which had just been overhauled and put in shape for short week-end cruises. But at this stage of the planning unforeseen obstacles arose. The engagement had not yet been announced to the Great World, and Helen appeared in no greater haste than Augusta to make the public commitment. To be sure, everybody in Columbus talked about it to an inordinate degree, and it was common gossip at the Michigan resort whither the Thurlows had repaired. To be sure, the ring was ordered and would arrive for delivery any day. "But we can't be married before next summer," Helen had pointed out in the letter which definitely settled the question:

And Stu, dear, I don't think it's quite fair to ask me to live like a cloistered nun for almost a year, which is precisely what I'll have to do if we announce it. It's not that I care about seeing other men, but who'll take me to dances or anything else while you're away at college? You know they'll simply shun me as the plague once they know for sure.

And so on, to the irrefutable extent of several pages. No, it wasn't fair, Stuart thought, when beaux and gaiety had been her breath of life; and although he could not help wishing secretly that she might have made the sacrifice, he ended by giving up with good grace.

So the "tea fight" was abandoned—with no great tears from Stuart. Helen was to come simply as a youthful friend and *protégée* of his mother's, let people smile and wag their heads as they please. But—and here the second difficulty raised its evil head—would their neighbours at Hyannis, after listening with ill-concealed indignation to Augusta's pronouncements on the war, condescend to anything so benign as smiles? The atmosphere environing the mother and son had suddenly changed from cordial acceptance to something resembling veiled hostility. The story of Augusta's toast on the eve of the cataclysm had gone abroad, and it was buttressed by unmistakable later evidence. For it had never occurred to Augusta that intelligent Americans, once they heard the inspired truth, could withhold allegiance to Germany's righteous cause. To her it was simply unthinkable that any one short of a flesh-and-blood Briton or Frenchman or Russian could favour the Allies. She made the dreadful error, that first week, of construing the silence of her friends for the passive "open mind"; and when the terrible realization broke upon her that there was no such thing as an "open" mind anywhere in America above the unthinking masses—that the New York *Times* read very much like the London *Times*—that the whole Eastern seaboard was more ardently pro-French than St. Petersburg and more bitter against Germany than London—then did consternation and anguish fill her soul. She felt that she, as an individual, had been some-

how darkly and inexplicably betrayed, just as the German nation had been betrayed. Small wonder that when the friendly salutations of other cottagers turned to glacial nods, she shut her jaw grimly and awaited the news of German victory as an hour of personal vindication.

She flatly refused to invite any of these people to her house. And Stuart, miserable over a situation which jeopardized the success of Helen's visit, sympathized with her pride because he knew how deeply she suffered. She had been woefully indiscreet, he thought, and assuredly wrong in feeling that others had less right to their convictions than she to hers; but that, after all, was the narrowness of maturity and the blindness of faith. Purblind she was to the other side—so, equally so, were those others blind and cruel. The world no longer saw things clearly, neither the Germans nor the Allies, so quickly had the red film dazed their eyes. Thus it seemed to Stuart, who felt that hatred, rather than exalted patriotism, was the primary fruit of war.

There remained but two courses: to postpone the visit till a more auspicious time, or make the best of the situation by falling back on the younger crowd. Their neighbours' sons and daughters were, with one or two exceptions, as cordial as ever to Stuart; either the war mattered less to them, or they had the impression that it mattered less to him. To resort entirely to their society meant excluding his mother and sacrificing Helen's chance of winning her favour. But that appeared preferable to shutting themselves up alone with that war-obsessed soul. Give up the visit?—never! In this dark hour he had too great need of Helen's love. . . .

III

He met her train at Boston early in the morning, and they had breakfast at the hotel before making the connection for Hyannis. It was a dazzling and ecstatic hour; they chattered like magpies, both feeling that the whole episode was quite gloriously

romantic—their first breakfast together—Helen blushing to the roots of her hair when Stuart commented on the obvious impression prevailing in the dining room that they were honeymooners. They both revelled in the sense of an adventure; and how very bright the day seemed after the rain of the night before, how marvellously blue and cleanly washed the sky, and the air glittering and fresh even in the city. There had never been such a morning, never such a pungent freshness in the air —as if it had been blown from far clean interstellar spaces to assist at this strange, miraculous re-creation of the earth. A re-creation for their special benefit! But what was the wonder of the new earth beside the ravishing wonder of rediscovering each other, of recapturing that happiness which was exquisitely novel and yet exquisitely similar to their sensations when last together, an emotion which, renewed, seemed to possess all the enthralling glamour of a first experience. It was indeed, Helen mused to herself, like what a honeymoon must be—like what theirs, of course, would be. And she looked very much like a bride, in her new tan tailored dress, her rakish little turban hat and summer ermine fur piece—which surely upheld the best traditions of fur pieces in giving warmth and colour, for never had been such vivacious colour as in Helen's face that morning!

They talked and talked, never quite finishing any sentence, while the greater part of their enormous breakfast grew cold or was removed scarcely tasted. They were hardly aware of breakfast at all. Nor of the dining room, nor of the fact that the waiter was outrageously over-tipped and proportionately unctuous, nor of the amused and sympathetic eyes which followed them out. Without a moment to lose they tumbled into a taxi, conscious indeed that they had less than five minutes to make their train, conscious also that they were in a conveyance which afforded at least partial immunity from inquisitive eyes—and straightway the latter fact obliterated the former. They behaved in a manner accurately described as

"too silly for words" by Helen, who attained an almost incredible degree of primness and dignity once they were seated in the crowded parlour car. Who wouldn't have been prim in that car? You sat a yard away from your neighbour, in a tremendous plush swivel-chair fashioned for some Gargantua, a chair which was determined to have nothing to do with its neighbour chairs, and which piously parted company with you the moment you attempted such a thing—a ponderous, censorious, Victorian chair! You sat just close enough to be tantalizingly aware of your closeness, just far enough apart to make conversation impossible without leaning forward or raising your voice—either of which rendered you horribly conspicuous to all the other chairs! The human spirit was preternaturally blighted in that parlour car, where every chair was filled, where there was no privacy, where the seat arrangement seemed cunningly contrived, like the firing arcs of a battleship's turrets, to provide the greatest possible concentration of fire ahead, astern, and broadside; and whenever you began to feel safe and unobserved, a newspaper or novel was moved to the right or left, and lo! another battery had been unmasked. Were there no sleepers on the train, no seats where they might talk unconstrainedly together? And this was to last for hours. . . .

A boy appeared from nowhere with the morning papers; people leaned forward, stood up abruptly; a murmur ran down the aisle as papers were eagerly seized right and left; heads were buried in the spreading white and black sheets. There was no need to carry out that figure literally—the papers could have been read at the other end of the car. All the news was in headlines, hyperbolical headlines which screamed that Paris was doomed, that the German hosts were unbelievably nearer their goal than they had been the day before. The basis for the headlines' sensational prophecy was meagre and, without a map, vague; merely the last announcement from Berlin that Von Klück's army had occupied a new and imposing list of towns

which an editor's note declared to represent a thirty-mile advance in the last twenty-four hours. The Uhlans had reached Chantilly. . . . "As near to Paris as that?" thought Stuart excitedly. He remembered Chantilly. "Listen to this, Helen!" he exclaimed, leaning forward and touching her arm. He had forgotten the rest of the car. "The Germans are almost *there!* As sure as we sit here they're going to take Paris. Why, it's the most amazing progress! . . . And yet there's no real news, no details of the fighting from either side. Nobody knows what's really going on." He read her the list of occupied towns, anxious that she realize as he realized. But midway she interrupted: "That's all very well, Stu, but did you read the French communiqué?"

He was surprised. "Yes—there's nothing in it. Why?"

"It says the Allies are continuing their strategic movement in good order, and"— she referred to her paper—"and according to preconceived plans."

"Their strategic movement!" He laughed scornfully, derisively—in appreciation of a delicious jest. "That's what they've been saying for the last two weeks, and two weeks ago they were fighting in Belgium instead of within a few miles of Paris. Don't you see, my dear? The strategy in this case will land them in the Mediterranean if they keep it up. It's only too clear what's happening, if you read between the lines. It's 1870 all over again——"

"But you just said, nobody knows what's really going on . . ."

There was more than remonstrance in her voice; there was a kind of patient, defiant resistance—the dogged, heartsick resistance of a forlorn hope. So she cared as much as all that? Her eyes met his resolutely, a little defiantly—and the last doubt of her caring vanished in their sudden revelation. He dropped his paper and stared out of the window, reflecting; and it struck him that there was much less matter for astonishment in her favouring the Allies—oh, much less—than that Helen and him-

self should be concerned over such an irrelevant topic as the war. Impulsively he blamed himself; in his excitement he had made no provision for such an attitude on her part, an attitude for which, after all, he should have been prepared; he felt provoked at his want of tact. But surely he had only spoken the truth—and why should she shut her eyes so deliberately to what was obvious? Hang it all, the Germans *were* winning! One didn't need be overwhelmingly pro-German, like his mother, to see that they were very near Paris, and that the Belgian invasion, however immoral, had so far paid them well. It was perhaps natural for a few fanatical people whose sympathies lay all with France—like the Verrills at Hyannis, whose daughter had married a French count—to hope against hope and snatch at whatever straws might bear them up. But Helen! He told himself he did not, would not mind in the least, however pro-this or pro-that any one might be, provided only they would stand up valiantly before the facts. . . .

She was asking him a question. "Do you really think the Germans will win, Stu?" And as he hesitated: "Do you—do you *want* them to win?"

"Why——" He knit his brows, frowned. It was hard to formulate his immensely complex and conflicting emotions on the war—he had failed thus far to resolve them satisfactorily to himself. He felt, too, the futility of such discussion. "I don't know what to say to either question, Helen. I certainly think the Germans will win on the land; if they take Paris no one can stop them. As for wanting them to win——" He sank his voice, conscious that eyes were regarding him from across the aisle. "Let's wait until later," he ended, with a gesture.

She returned to her paper, her face pensive and slightly troubled.

"There's one thing I'd better tell you now, though," he said after a moment. "Mother's very much worked up about the whole thing. She—she has talked a good deal——"

"She's pro-German?"

He nodded.

"Then you feel the same way," she concluded thoughtfully.

He threw discretion to the winds. "Yes, but with a difference, Helen. She's heart and soul for Germany; I only feel —I don't know how to put it. I hate to see France and Belgium smashed, but I certainly don't want Russia to win! And England—well, if there were any danger of the Germans really wiping up England, as they've done with Belgium—but they can't. It's just a naval war between England and Germany; a commercial fight; the British Army doesn't count because it isn't the whole nation like the French is. After all, somebody's got to lose, and I don't know but what it would be a good thing for the British to get a little of the conceit knocked out of them. But what's the use of our taking it so seriously? What does it matter to us whether the Germans take Paris or the Allies take Berlin?"

"Yes, but it does matter, Stu." She was very earnest. "I can't understand your—— Don't you see what it will mean if the Germans win? It would mean that any nation that wants to—that can go to work and build up a big army behind everyone's back, and then pounce on somebody that's weaker—any bully—— Don't you see? It means that everything is just force. That's what Father says; he says that England would never have gone in if it hadn't been for that, and that the Allies simply *must* win—or else, somehow——"

"My dear"—he suddenly smiled into her troubled face; a wistful smile that went out slowly. "I appreciate all that; but—I'm afraid you and Mother would hardly hit it off if you got started on the war. Let's respect each other's opinions. At any rate, please be indulgent toward my mother's. I don't ask you, dear, to agree with her—only don't talk about it with her. She has a great many friends in Germany."

She said nothing for a long time, but sat with her little firm chin supported on her clenched hand, while her eyes, very

sombre and deep for all their pellucid blue, regarded the whirling landscape with a melancholy abstraction. Both shrank from further reference to the war; once he thought her about to speak, but she apparently thought better of it and turned her face again toward the window. He longed to explain more fully his own theory of the conflict, to elucidate his position and reconcile their divergent views; yet his common sense told him the first was presumptuous folly and the last impossible. She would not have spoken that way had she been open to conviction. But did the universe still hold an intelligent being who had not already an "attitude" toward that all-challenging horror? Not one, he thought, with a mind of his own; and the war a month old.

He sat staring at the paper on his lap, and tried to view their difference dispassionately. He was annoyed that she had dragged in her father; yet it struck him suddenly that perhaps he himself had been influenced by others; by his mother. But only in slight degree—hardly at all! And that curiously analytical mind, which opposition always quickened in him, fell to wondering at his own partisanship, what had gone to mould it, why it mattered to him. A strange and baffling question—how men got their opinions! This war . . . prejudices instantly forming, in his own case, in every case; men taking sides instinctively, striking a bearing at the very outset whereby to steer their craft of "views," and shaping every wind of fact or rumour, it seemed, to their own course. Queer old notions tucked away in men's brains, their origins forgotten; and then they read or heard something, and the jumbled fragments sprang up and formed a combination . . . always a different combination in each mind, because the origins were different, the synthesis a law to itself in each individual brain. Yet men, and women, changed their minds, sometimes. . . .

"Mother will never change hers," he thought; and straightway his personal problem—his and Helen's—surged back. He leaned forward, touched her arm gently. "About Mother,"

he said, "I spoke that way because—you and she must get on. So much depends on it, dear! It may be difficult not to say anything—if she mentions it, you know—when you feel so differently. But you won't mind, will you?"

She caught his hand affectionately. "Of course I won't! Only——" she smiled, and reluctantly released his hand. "But I'll keep my mouth shut, Stu—if I have to sew it up! I do want so much to have your mother like me."

"Like you? Ah, my dear——"

Why couldn't all those stupid people watch the scenery for a moment?

But after a little, after one of those communions of lovers' eyes that are never measurable by time, she dropped her gaze and reverted to self-consciousness. There were those black headlines on her lap, separating their hands. With a determined gesture she pushed the paper down, and trampled it beneath her foot as if it were symbolic of some intruding evil thing.

CHAPTER VI

A VICTORY AND A DEFEAT

I

THE visit had been unexpectedly successful.

From that first night, when they had had a family dinner on the glassed-in porch overlooking the sea, Augusta had behaved toward her son's fiancée in a manner flawlessly correct and hospitable. Even though the source of her good-nature, her expectation of the impending fall of Paris, was offensive to Helen, the mere tangible fact of its benignity brought the girl such relief from her forebodings that she told herself there were compensations for the war. It might be ever so irritating, at the moment, to see Stuart's mother smile that exultant, triumphant smile—as if by the mere thought which provoked it Augusta were confounding the encircling enemies of the Fatherland; it might be infuriating at times to hear her challenge: "Well, the news ought to come through any day now!" and to assist at her gloating anticipation; but these things were to be borne philosophically, as a penalty for the joy of being with Stuart. And the strain of submerging her own views had proved less irksome than she had feared. She had flashes of intuition which revealed the visit as something more than an essay in winning good-will; it was a test, a battle in which no quarter was asked or given, which taxed her every resource of courage and self-control. All her pride and all her will were engaged as allies to her love. And when the battle seemed most disheartening, when, as on that first night of Augusta's elation over the German advance, it had been hard to hold her tongue, she fell back on her great support and comfort, the

knowledge of her ascendency in Stuart's heart. That was her treasure hoard, her stronghold; with that she was invincible.

For the rest, it was a joy to spend the long September days away from that spreading gray "cottage" (which contained fifteen rooms), spend them tramping over the sunburnt golf course, drinking in the salt savour of the sea with Stuart at her side; spend long hours on the beach with the happy "younger crowd"; spend them in sailing parties, long motor rides, dancing, and carefree laughing banter—those hours were pure delight, unstained by thought of the future, or of what was happening in Europe, or even, for the most part, of her redoubtable problem. They fortified her against the rarer encounters with her adversary. Moreover, she was making slight but gratifying headway with that adversary; there were occasional signs, unmistakable signs, that Augusta's attitude was relaxing. For the older woman admired poise and "spirit," and in her innermost heart there was perhaps a secret, unsuspected weakness before what she would have been the first to call "romantic foolishness"—that weakness in all older women before youthful love, and the spectacle of young lovers together, and the virgin charm of girlhood that awakens long-dormant memories of their own lost youth. A vein of sentimentalism, if you like, ever so deeply hidden in Augusta and encrusted between hard layers of cynical resistance and disillusion; suppressed, fought down and strangled, but throbbing faintly now and then! Thus on the third evening, when Helen came down to dinner with dancing eyes and ruddy wind-blown cheeks, deliciously fresh and crisp in her chiffon evening gown, when Helen smiled that happy, disarming smile that was like a radiant emanation of youth—Augusta surprised them all by murmuring: "My dear!"

And the next morning she had come down to the beach alone, and watched the half-dozen boys and girls sporting in the long curling breakers, watched the white limbs flashing in the sun as some Praxitelean figure rose dripping by the float, and then dived off again in the joyous, poised abandon of arc-like flight

—watched the gleaming arms cleaving the lazy, turquoise sea, and the shining caps of the girls bobbing in the spray . . . she watched them for a long time. But presently some of the other cottagers came down, and after a proud exchange of nods, she walked away. . . . .

If only Stuart and Helen could have divined how that nerve was throbbing! If only Augusta could have brought herself to say: "I am lonely, and beaten—and oh, this war is cruel!" But there it was—always the war. She could think of nothing without the next moment thinking of the war; without the war intervening between her ego and the warmth of the sun. And youth is notoriously wrapped up in itself, and blind. Stuart was blind. Helen could not rid herself of that persistent, no-longer-useful delusion that she was fighting a battle against an implacable foe. They were like the tortured figures in the Laocoön, ensnared in a gigantic coil of their individual wills—and because they were powerless in that coil, they could not flee, nor even avert their eyes, from the Destiny which drew nearer and nearer, and was enmeshing a world.

II

A yachting party had been planned for the fifth day. The original suggestion had come from Stuart, but it required an afternoon and evening of unseasonable heat to bring the idea to germination in Augusta's mind. A luncheon party was called off; the two other couples invited were more than agreeable to the change, which contemplated a day's sail along the coast, luncheon on board, and a return in time for a dinner-dance that evening. The next morning the weather turned abruptly cool and cloudy, with a strong offshore wind blowing from the Cape; nevertheless, the party left on schedule time.

The *Valkyrie*, called yacht by courtesy, was a trim, shapely day cruiser of eighty feet over all, narrow beamed to give good bottom lines, and by virtue of them and her pair of enormous gasoline motors, capable of 14 knots or better. Her after-

deck was comfortable if not spacious, her cabin large, light, and beautifully furnished in teak and satinwood, with bright-coloured cushions of silk and tiny clusters of lights set in buried bronze sconces; and her dining saloon—in creamy white and rose-wood and rose silk curtains—seemed to Helen the daintiest and most entrancing place she had ever seen. And everything, from the shining brass of railings and ventilators to the luncheon service and even the silk-draped portholes, was so spotlessly splendid and immaculate! It was the girl's first visit aboard a yacht, and she gloried in it, exploring every nook in company with Stuart and the other guests; admiring the bridge, listening with delighted awe to Stuart's proud explanation of the functions of bridge controls, admiring the engine room, the cabin, the dining salon, the tiny staterooms, and the galley—she was enraptured, ecstatic, about the galley. It all seemed to her a complete little world in itself, a world of romance and bright, breath-taking adventure; and it belonged to Stuart's mother! That made it almost belong to Stuart; and didn't Stuart belong to her? There was exquisite glamour in every inch of the *Valkyrie*. Helen had never been happier in her life than during that first hour of the "cruise."

Was she too eager, too ingenuously delighted and enthusiastic? Augusta, indeed, was rather proud of the *Valkyrie;* but Augusta's soul was the soul of a landlubber, to whom a yacht or cruiser was merely an expensive, beautiful toy, a sort of marine limousine that one employed for a day's or afternoon's diversion, with the hope that it wouldn't roll uncomfortably or cause one's digestive system to indulge in virulent yearnings for the land. It was all right that the young people properly appreciated the fittings and furnishings, which had cost an outrageous sum; it was pleasant to hear them sing the vessel's praises, which after all reflected no little credit on the owner's taste and prosperity; it gave her a sense of self-importance, a consciousness of solid worth and excellence surpassing even her permanent suspicions of these ingrained qualities: and this was very

gratifying and satisfactory. If Helen had stopped short at the dining salon and galley, and hadn't gone on about the bridge and engine room and all those queer, funny little thing-a-majigs upstairs (no, Augusta always caught herself before saying "upstairs")—all those things above in which Augusta wasn't even slightly interested and couldn't conceive any one else being interested, it is quite possible that the older woman might have started the trip in better humour. It is possible she might have forgotten that the day had already begun badly with the morning papers again barren of the news she so anxiously awaited—the news of the fall of Paris. But now, after the party had found chairs under the after-deck awning and settled down to animated conversation, it was positively irritating to hear Helen still exclaiming about one thing or another, to hear her still asking questions of Stuart—or worse—asking questions of Augusta herself which Augusta was afraid to answer for fear of displaying her immense ignorance of all things nautical. She suddenly thought grimly: "The child's never seen a yacht before!" and immediately a second thought occurred: "And this is the girl Stuart's going to marry. How provincial and naïve she is." And a third thought: "I gave her credit for poise, but sooner or later bad breeding will out. How she runs on to Stuart! Can't the boy see that she's dazzled by things like this—that she's crazy about money and what money will buy? Of course, I suppose it's less her fault than her mother's—Grace Thurlow's probably never seen a yacht either, and she would rave about it in the same silly way."

At this juncture some of her scorn was transferred to one of the other girls, who was enthusing with fervour fully equal to Helen's on the heavy sea running at the vessel's bows—it was quite too lovely that the wind was kicking up big white-caps and that the wake of the *Valkyrie* was fairly boiling! Augusta came very near exclaiming, "Bah!" loudly enough for all to hear. For the *Valkyrie* was indubitably beginning to roll; and to express enthusiasm over such a dismal and disquieting

fact struck Augusta as nothing short of outrage. Her mood grew more and more bilious as the morning wore on; grew appallingly bilious and saturnine and miserable for an hour, accompanied by symptoms of internal discomfort and furious regrets that she had ever allowed Stuart to cajole her into this absurd expedition—that she had ever bought the wretched boat in the first place; until—but not before she had retired to a stateroom on the pretext of finding a book—until by some strange miracle, the wind suddenly fell off, the motion gradually subsided to a gently swelling rise and fall, and miracle of miracles! —the internal symptoms disappeared. And none too soon. Fifteen minutes later the party sat down to luncheon, and Augusta, filled with a great inward thanksgiving at the defeat of Boreas and Neptune, actually presided at that function with something of her old assurance and tranquil self-importance. More—she enjoyed it! The food was delicious, and the youngsters were a jolly, light-hearted and likeable lot! For the first time, she rejoiced in the prospect of the afternoon.

Who would have thought that pitfalls could lurk in that gay, vapid, and entirely innocent conversation? Or that the fact of young Richard Draper's having brought his banjo-mandolin should lead to a disaster?

They had reached the dessert before the banjo-mandolin was mentioned. It was Stuart who first recalled the fact of its presence. "What would you say," he proposed genially, "to Dick performing for us after lunch?"

"I'd say *frightful*," returned the third young man of the party with a grin.

There was the usual laugh.

"Come on, Dick, don't be bashful," someone urged.

"By all means, Richard must play for us." It was Augusta, beaming.

Richard, a small, smiling, spectacled youth, appeared reluctant.

There was a feminine chorus of, "Oh, yes!" and "Please play,

Dick," and "Oh, *do*, Dick!" until the owner of the banjo-mandolin, secretly flattered for all his outward diffidence, equivocated: "Well—if there's a majority vote——"

"I protest!" groaned the bosom friend in a hollow voice and with a gesture of mock despair.

"You're outvoted, Chuck," said Stuart. There was a general sentiment that Chuck was heavily outvoted.

"I claim inside knowledge as the basis of my protest," returned the heckler, who was merely repeating a formula which he had found invariably successful in the past. "I tell you, you don't realize what you're getting into. Dick always gets sentimental when he plays. And when he gets sentimental, he tries to sing. And when he sings——" He shrugged his shoulders hopelessly. "Have you ever heard him sing? Ah, no, I thought not! You have yet to learn the meaning of frightfulness."

They all laughed—even Augusta, who was beginning to feel annoyed. And Helen, thoughtless, warm-hearted, impulsive Helen, who liked Dick and thought the heckling had gone too far, and who, moreover, saw that Augusta was annoyed, seized on the momentary pause to declare warmly: "Well, that's one atrocity that I refuse to believe!"

Now in September, 1914, the words "frightfulness" and "atrocity" were already beginning to acquire a quite special significance—a very odious and particularized significance. Already there were accounts in all the papers of almost incredible incidents of the German invasion. To Augusta, and to hundreds of thousands of German-Americans, they were the most dastardly lies of history, part of a campaign of despicable slander unparalleled through the ages—they were lies, lies, lies! Could any one of German blood, any one who knew the Germans—that peaceful, kindly, sentimental folk—believe that honest German soldiers could wantonly shoot down defenceless women and old men? Could rape and plunder and burn and destroy? Could mutilate little children? Could any one in

his right mind believe such things? And they said it was done deliberately, under orders given in cold blood! The mere mention of the word "atrocity" sufficed to kindle Augusta's blood to the boiling point, to send her berserk. . . .

The colour mantled her face. And staring at Helen with a kind of deadly, concentrated intensity, and clipping off her words, she said: "Is that—the only kind—you refuse to believe?"

There was a stunned silence.

"I—I don't understand you," Helen murmured. She, too, had flushed.

Then she felt a foot—Stuart's, she thought—pressing hers under the table.

"I think you heard what I said." Augusta had not taken her eyes from the girl's face.

"Mother!" Stuart begged. His voice was anguished.

Helen, under that furious stare, grew hot and icy cold by turns. The foot was still pressing hers, hurting with its pressure. It exasperated her. "I see no occasion——" she said, and it was as if her voice had somehow become detached from her mind, had spoken from another body and flaunted her will. She was quivering all over. Augusta's lip was twitching; she had finally averted her gaze. The others were silent, engaged in the painful effort of avoiding each other's eyes.

"Let's go up on deck"—Stuart, very nervous, pushing back his chair—"that is, if—I think everyone has finished. Dick, you get your mandolin."

Augusta rose.

That was all. Not another word was said. The young people fairly jostled against each other in their eagerness to leave that table behind. Helen left with them; and by some instinctive moment of sympathy or awe, they all with one accord, as they reached the little three-step ladder leading to the deck, made way for her precedence. She walked rapidly, looking straight ahead, her cheeks flaming; and as she reached a

wicker divan, sank down and silently gazed out over the stern down the long wake of swirling green sea and foam. Presently she looked around. Stuart and his mother had remained behind.

Outwardly, her composure had returned. But her heart beat wildly. Stuart had stayed behind—stayed with that venomous, hateful madwoman! And these others—almost strangers—noticed it, of course! She could feel their eyes, the eyes of the other girls, curiously studying her in veiled, fugitive glances that always darted off and avoided hers. She could hear them talking, banally, with a strained effort to achieve nonchalance and pretend that nothing had happened—talking as if from a great distance, the attenuated sounds reaching her buzzing ears like spent runners after a long and gruelling race. Dick was tuning his banjo-mandolin, strumming clashing, soft chords. There was a soft thud on the divan cushion as someone sat down beside her; it was Chuck, the big red-faced boy with the long nose and wide gray-green eyes. Dimly she apprehended that he had come to sympathize with her. She detested him. She didn't want sympathy—she didn't want to talk, to pretend. . . . If only Stuart would come and take her hand and lead her away from all those gaping faces!

"Say, I'm awfully sorry, Miss Thurlow. It was all my fault," Chuck was saying. He was very earnest about it, and his eyes—queer eyes, she thought—had a kindly, troubled expression. Before them some of her hostility evaporated. "It wasn't any one's fault!" she said shortly, and turned again toward the stern.

"Now, you know that isn't so. I guess there's no doubt whose fault it was—after mine, that is." He dropped his voice. "She ought to be shot!"

Helen felt very grateful to him.

She made an effort, and found, to her great surprise, that she was talking with Chuck about nothing in particular, chatting easily and, it seemed, quite coherently. And with the dis-

covery, the tension that had held her in a cruel vise seemed insensibly to relax. She felt like a swimmer who has suddenly touched bottom after a long, relentless struggle in a heavy sea. She began to like Chuck. A funny boy, she thought, frightfully homely—and such a queer long nose! A nose that wrinkled and twitched oddly as he talked, that had a funny little hump at the end which slid up and down ever so little just before he laughed. That nose fascinated her; it became paramount among her sensations. She tried to keep her eyes away from it, but they kept always returning, covertly and slyly and obstinately. Apparently they didn't believe it was real. . . . Dick was playing some soft, delicious necromancy on the mandolin. She thought idly: "He plays very well, keeps excellent time." It was a waltz; yes, it was "Nights of Gladness." That dance at Stuart's where they had become engaged! She wanted to close her eyes and give herself up to the illusion that she was back in that ballroom with the rose-coloured lights, dancing in Stuart's arms. And again she felt unhappy—oh, worse than unhappy!—deserted, lonely, miserable. Why didn't Stuart come? Why had he left her to face these strangers alone? But of course he had to stay, a dogged inner voice kept patiently reiterating—had to stay to fight it out with his mother. In the interests of harmony, with the whole afternoon before them, with other guests, he had to stay.

The minutes dragged slowly—five minutes, ten, fifteen minutes had passed since they left the table. And presently Stuart appeared—alone. He walked slowly, and his right hand fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette; walked nervously, with his head bent forward in that characteristic stoop, and his face, beneath his tan, glowed a dull brick-red. Chuck, from the divan, got up; Dick stopped playing and got up. An enormous embarrassment held them all. Someone said desperately: "Dick's been playing." It was the best they could do.

"Go ahead, Dick—please," said Stuart. He sank down in

the vacant chair opposite Helen and Chuck and struck a match to light his cigarette. It went out. At once Chuck offered him another—and another—and everyone felt absurdly relieved that the wind blew them out and that the episode had to be prolonged. It was extraordinary how anxious they were to light that cigarette. Dick resumed his strumming of the mandolin. Finally, at the fifth match, they began to laugh about the cigarette; everyone laughed. Conversation began again. The worst was over.

And presently there occurred that picturesque and dramatic diversion which at first seemed to have saved the day.

The *Valkyrie* had altered her course, and was swinging around to head back toward Hyannisport. As she turned, the sun suddenly broke through the low-hanging curtain of gray-black, rain-bearing clouds—clouds which had caused low visibility all day; and out toward sea, on the port side, a luminous misty radiance grew brighter and brighter, and the sea in the distance glittered and shone.

And as they looked and strained their eyes, out of the mist, with the sun on her, stood a long, lead-coloured British cruiser —steaming slowly, without smoke from her four high rakish funnels, without a soul visible on decks or bridge, with her fore and aft guns elevated and trained toward the shore.

After the first exclamations, the first mad scramble for the rail, they watched her in silence. A feeling of awe, of mingled unbelief and admiration, held them rigid. It was like an unearthly, horizonal mirage; an illusory projection of some picture their minds had seen elsewhere, in a newspaper or magazine, and had imaged and retained. It wasn't real! Yet there she was, not over a thousand yards away, weather-beaten and gray and ugly—a grim invader from that remote, incredible world of war. They hunted hurriedly for binoculars, found several pairs, and watched her intently in an effort to make out her name. Stuart, who had run up to the bridge, returned with the information that she was a cruiser of the

Hampshire class, one of the patrolling squadron, perhaps, that had chased the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie* into Bar Harbor; her name was indistinguishable. Then, as the little group had broken into pairs, he drew Helen, by a sign, a little away.

"Dear," he began awkwardly, abruptly, "I'm awfully sorry."

She gave him a quick glance. "Wait until later, Stu."

"She isn't herself," he went on. "You see, she thought—what you said—— She feels very strongly about that question."

"Evidently!" Helen's tone was mordant.

He stood beside her, staring at the fast-vanishing spectre of the man-of-war, and pursued as if soliloquizing: "It was unfortunate—most unfortunate. When everything was going so well. Of course, dear, it wasn't your fault——"

There was a pause. "Though you can't blame her, under the circumstances!" he added suddenly, as if the submerged thought had popped up, cork-like, to the surface of his mind. Then he roused himself, and turning, asked in a different voice: "Don't you want the glasses for another look?"

"No, thanks." She walked away slowly. And she felt ill, mentally and physically ill, and shaken, and sick at heart. She rejoined the little group at the stern.

It was then that Augusta appeared from the cabin. They heard her voice, taut, incisive, eager—heard her cry out to Stuart: "What's this about a British cruiser?" And she was suddenly among them, leaning tensely against the rail between them and Stuart, with the binoculars which she had snatched from him pressed to her eyes.

Thus she stood for a long minute, for what seemed an interminable time, intense, isolated, absorbed; so absorbed that she might have been standing on a lonely reef in mid-ocean, shut off from all the living, sentient world. A proud and passionate figure, not so much ignoring those others as sublimely unconscious that they existed. They watched her nervously, with sidelong glances.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's gone!" She lowered the glasses, handed them to Stuart. Abruptly she faced the others. She was tremendously excited. It was obvious that all impression of the luncheon had been entirely effaced, for the time being, from her mind. She regarded them impersonally as so many animate abstractions—they were merely auditors, puppets with ears. "*Do you realize?*" she demanded passionately; "do you? Within ten miles of the shore—of America! Oh! I wish——" she broke off abruptly. They stared at her, spellbound. "If we could only *do* something!" she burst out, and sank limply into a chair.

After a moment Dick, with a grim, resolute expression, took up the banjo-mandolin and mechanically began to pick the strings. Everyone sat down again—everyone except Stuart, who continued nervously his pacing up and down. "What was that last thing you were playing, Dick?" he asked. There was an excess of polite interest, of solicitude, in his voice.—"You mean 'The Devil's Ball'?" returned Dick.—"No, not that—the fox-trot. Don't you know? The one with the runs."—"This the one?" interrogated Dick, and began another, livelier tune.—"Yes, that's it. . . ." They carried it off perfectly. At the end of the piece Augusta rose, excused herself briefly, and went below.

After a while they started a game of six-handed "Michigan," and played until the *Valkyrie* came in sight of the pier. They were all extremely considerate toward one another, extremely polite and quick to laugh at any remark, however banal, that offered the slightest pretext for light-heartedness. They were superbly casual and gallant and composed. Perhaps Helen was the most composed and natural of all. She laughed more than any of the others. One would scarcely have suspected, during that long, artificial exercise of carefully maintained pretence, that she was making the most heartrending decision she had ever been called upon to make—or that her laughter, once or twice, came very near hysteria.

III

On the pier, while the party was breaking up amid expressions of satisfaction over the delightful and highly successful day, while Augusta stood receiving the courteous gratitude of her guests, Helen drew Stuart aside. "We haven't much time to dress for dinner," she began, "not if we're going to be on time. You know how much longer it takes me than it does you, Stu. So I wondered—would you mind running downtown before you go back? While I'll get Chuck to take me to the house so I can start dressing——"

He was mystified. "But why—what——"

"I want you to change my reservation," she went on quickly. "I'm going back to-morrow."

"Nonsense, Helen! You'll do nothing of the kind. Why—you mustn't feel that way! Please, dear, *please!*"

She silenced him with an imperious little gesture. "I've made up my mind, Stu. Don't argue now—we'll discuss it later, if you wish. Only it's quite final, I assure you. . . . Please do as I ask."

"At least let me take you up first," he begged.

"No, dear. And one other thing—don't get tickets for yourself to Boston. I'll go back alone."

His face, towering over hers, grew pink. "You'll do nothing of the kind!" he repeated.

"Please——" She was very quiet and determined. "No more scenes." And she turned away.

An hour later, when she issued forth from her room and descended to the hall, Stuart was nowhere in sight. She walked into the living room, where the sound of low-pitched voices from the next room was faintly audible. As she crossed the room the voices abruptly ceased, and a moment later Stuart, in dinner coat, appeared in the doorway. It flashed through Helen's mind that she had been the subject of the repressed conversation in the next room. "He's been at his mother

again," she thought, "and perhaps—perhaps——" A great hope awakened in her heart. It might not be too late, after all. The damage might not be irreparable; if only Augusta would make the apology of her accord and not from Stuart's suasion.

"All ready?" he asked.

"Quite." She hesitated. "Are you—going to say good-night to your mother?"

"I just did."

There was an awkward pause.

"Do you—" he said, "do you want to say anything to her?"

The hope flickered and went out miserably; and in its place something hardened within her.

"I have nothing to say to her," she answered.

Neither spoke again until they were seated in the car. As they drove off he began: "I got the tickets changed all right. Nine-thirty in the morning, with a section from Boston on."

"Thank you, Stu."

"It's very hard," he pursued, "not to ask you to reconsider. I want so much for you to remain. But I'm not going to ask you again. You are probably right; nothing would be gained by your staying. And yet—dearest, I can't tell you, I can't begin to tell you, how sorry I am! And I had hoped—I had a desperate feeling that perhaps everything would work itself out all right—I still feel it would, if you'd stay. I can't help but feel it would." He slowed down, stopped the car at a lonely place on the road, then turned to her imploringly. "Look here, dear, won't you stay just another day? And in the morning—you know, Helen, with just three words everything can be made right! Just three words, and you and I can be happy all our lives! Isn't it worth it, dear? They're never so hard to say—never so hard as one imagines before they're said. Go to her and say, 'I am sorry.'"

"Never!" She had drawn back suddenly, and her eyes

flashed. "Stuart Evans, that's the last thing I ever thought you'd ask me to do!"

"Don't misunderstand me," he said, after a moment. "Don't think I mean to take her part. She owes you an apology—no one sees that more clearly than I. But you're a girl—she's an older woman. A very proud woman, Helen. But underneath she's got a heart of gold. She hasn't been herself. She's suffered terribly; you can't realize how much. Even though you think she's in the wrong, can't you—can't you do what I ask?"

"Oh! Stuart——" She had slumped down dejectedly in the seat. "Did you ask her to apologize to me?"

"Yes."

"And she refused?"

He nodded. There was a pause.

"And after that, you still think I ought to go to her," she said, as if to herself. Then she turned to him. "I can't do it, Stuart. It's not a matter of pride. It simply wouldn't do any good. Because—— Let's not discuss it now. We'll be late to dinner. I can't do it, that's all."

"Hang dinner! There're some things more important—— '

"I'm hungry, Stu. And when I'm hungry, my temper isn't the best."

He drove on angrily. After a little she said more gently: "I didn't mean that, Stu. I—we might as well have the whole thing out. I might as well tell you now. The whole thing's just impossible. It isn't a question of my apologizing to her or her to me. It's much bigger—more complex. Oh, I can't explain! It's the whole thing—the war—everything!"

"You mean that you can't forgive her for being pro-German?" There was a curious anxiety in his voice.

"It isn't the fact of her being pro-German, Stu. Not altogether that. It's what lies behind the fact. Don't you see what I mean? It's much bigger—it's her attitude on everything. I just feel that her mind doesn't work in the same way.

She and I would always split. I would always feel that there was just no way—no way of making her see—or feel—as I do. And you—you would always see things as she sees them. . . . There's no use talking about it any more."

"I suppose not," he answered grimly. "There's only one thing left unsaid. No, it's been implied already. Only, think it over carefully, Helen! And don't give me your final answer now. Wait until . . . until you are less tired."

Her lip was trembling, but she said no more. And after a little, he added: "I got tickets for myself, because I intended to go back part of the way regardless of what you said. But I won't now. I want you to make the decision alone."

"I'm afraid it's already made, Stu."

He did not plead with her again all evening; he had no heart for further pleading or discussion; nor had she. Once or twice she wanted to go to him impulsively and tell him it didn't matter—that nothing would matter if he would go on loving her; and again, she caught herself wishing desperately that he would use the ticket he had bought against her request, that he would at the last minute board the train with her the next morning, and never leave her side. Ah, if he should ask her to run away! If he could, just once, let himself go! He was too sane, too good-natured, too admirably self-restrained and logical. At one moment she felt passionately reckless and rebellious—why couldn't he revolt against his mother, why couldn't they both revolt against society, everything? . . . Then the flame would fall, the mood pass, and again she would be conscious only of her weariness, and the utter hopeless futility of trying to ignore the facts. Always her reason stood above the conflict, superior, invulnerable—and cold, cold as ice. And always that return to hopeless, bleak despondency.

At ten-thirty they went home, that Helen might pack for the morrow.

He drove her, alone, to the station—after they had breakfasted together without his mother, who had come down at the

last moment to say a very formal good-bye. Augusta had not shaken hands. There had been the last-minute arrival of the trunk people and the carrying out of luggage to aid in easing the tension. Once in the car, he produced the morning paper from his pocket. "I thought you'd want to read it," he said. "You can't always get the Boston papers at the station."

"But I don't care that much about it," she protested.

"You will, when you see the news. Besides, I didn't care to leave it for Mother. The Germans are falling back, Helen."

"Oh! Does it mean——"

"It means that for the time being Paris is saved. The whole German Army is in retreat."

"Thank Heaven for that!" she burst out, with all the fervour of her impetuous soul. Then she remembered; saw the dejection written on his face. "Forgive me, Stu; but, oh, I couldn't help it! I don't want to gloat—there's been enough gloating during the past week. I don't want to triumph, Stu! But it just seems—as if—well, I *had* to have some good news, I just had to."

"Then I'm glad it came, Helen," he said quietly, without turning his head.

"Yes—that's like you, dear. You're too decent—too generous. Oh! and you needed it, too—needed good news as much as I." In that moment she was very close to tenderness—how close, he had no idea. And they were already within sight of the station.

She didn't know whether to be glad or sorry that he had mentioned the fact of her departure at the dance the night before. That there was a little group to see her off—Dick, and Kate Wedgewood, and Chuck—her reason told her was for the best; and yet she hated it. She loathed it, the unreasonable girl; and she was exceptionally gracious and kind and thankful to them; she made them feel that she had never appreciated anything so much as their coming to the train. All of which was a good thing, because Stuart had obviously lost his tongue.

Stuart was never cut out for dramatic partings or heroic renunciations; he lacked the flair; he looked what he was—disconsolate and wretched. He even glared at Chuck when the latter announced his intention—after Helen had playfully encouraged him—of going to Columbus at the first opportunity, *via* the Twentieth Century to save time. . . . But before any one thought to notice Stuart, the train whistled far down the track, and they all moved down the platform toward an area where the law of probabilities argued that the parlour car would stop. And then the roar of the train, drowning out their thoughts and voices, and the last-minute shaking of hands.

He followed her into the car, found her chair, and hesitated—awkwardly, miserably, with one hand holding his straw hat and the other, big, red, hairy-backed, outstretched to take hers. "Good-bye, Helen," he said. They were very close to each other; she gave him her hand—and glanced around. They were on the shady side of the car, and the window curtain was raised. Outside, below, stood Chuck and the others, peering up. And Stuart made a fatal mistake. "Don't forget, dear," he said, because he could think of nothing else to say—"Don't forget; you can always change your mind."

And the next instant, as the engine whistled, he was striding down the aisle.

They were waving good-bye, waving, diminishing, receding. They were only a tiny group, very blurred and confused. But not until they were out of sight did she dab her handkerchief to her eyes.

CHAPTER VII

MIDNIGHT OUTPOURINGS

I

. . . You say, Uncle Arthur, that I have heard only the German side. You say that it's natural for me to sympathize with my mother's views, and you imply that I ought to develop an outlook of my own in regard to the war. Now that is absolutely unfair. Granted that I feel that sympathy, please remember that I'm quite old enough to think for myself. I've seen enough and read enough about the whole business, Lord knows, and have enough friends who are concerned, like you, to save my soul from the black damnation of being pro-German! Blame me for my attitude if you wish, but please don't accuse me any more of getting it from someone else.

No, far from doing too little thinking about the war, I have, if anything, done too much. The war has meant more to Mother and me than to most people; meant too much, I suspect. Nearly all the fellows here, for example, are heart and soul for the Allies, and are very ready to express themselves emphatically on the subject. But very few read the papers thoroughly; they do the headlines, may be aware that Antwerp's fallen; but when it comes to argument or to backing up their assertions with facts, they display a beautiful ignorance. Like their elders, they take refuge in disdainfully saying: "Oh, well! He's a German, and of course wants the dirty Huns to win." That's the sort of thing that gets my goat. If I've become a little bitter, can you blame me? I've already paid the penalty for my views; I've lost the only girl I ever cared about; here at college half my friends shun me, and the other half charitably assume that I'm off my base—even my room-mate avoids me whenever there's any real news. And on top of that, you write me a nice, kindly letter urging me to think for myself! . . .

The writer, bent over a flat-topped desk in a student's room much cluttered with leather-upholstered furniture, floor lamps,

bookcases, and a piano, paused at this point, and with pen doubtfully raised, stared at the blank wall beyond an upright row of books. His face, just above and outside the mellow lamplight, wore an intensely preoccupied and gloomy expression; which somewhat lightened, in a moment, as he read over what he had written. "Pretty strong," he half whispered to himself. "I'm afraid too strong. I ought to scratch that out about Helen. But let it go—it's almost midnight." Then he read it over again, to pick up his argument; and the biting irony of the page, which had cost him a half-hour's effort, struck him as decidedly good, as a revelation of literary power of which he had scarcely suspected himself capable.

One other thing, and then let's drop the war. In a roundabout way you accuse me of what you call "the eternal spirit of opposition," and you say you can understand that in me, because my father and nearly all the Evanses had it. Do you mean from that that I'm pro-German just out of sheer contrariness? Thanks! I have nothing of the iconoclast in my makeup. Granted that persons of my persuasion about the war are at present in a minority, I assure you I held the persuasion long before I perceived the minority.

Perhaps I did feel less strongly at first than I feel now. But if my views have hardened, it's not only because I—and my mother—have had to pay the price for them. There's more than that. It's because I'm sick and disgusted at the blind, unthinking, violent hatred of your majority—the tremendous pro-Allied sentiment of this country—and of their vituperation of all things German. They don't know the meaning of fairness! They can't even admit that the Germans are winning, that they almost took Paris; they refuse to believe that Von Spee sunk a fleet of British cruisers the other day at Coronel; at one minute they damn the "Huns" for building up a great war machine, and the next minute say the Germans can't fight, and that they owe their gains to artillery, and that they go to the slaughter like dumb cattle; they talk about the wonderful stand of the British Army at Mons, and in the next breath about the "Angels" of Mons, whose divine intervention (to judge from the bare fact that the next "stand" the British made was a good many miles nearer Paris) was sorely needed! It's this sort of cant that turns my stomach against the Allies. Here's Hilaire Belloc, for example, telling readers of the

New York *Times* that the German Army isn't any good, that German soldiers have to be chained together and driven at the point of their officers' pistols and riding crops to the charge; determining by statistics the exact date when the Russians will take Berlin, the exact date when the British and French will conquer on the Western front, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. Damn it, can't people stand up before the facts? Can't they admit the Germans have one or two virtues left, and that the Allies haven't quite yet monopolized military valour and capacity? I want Germany to win; and yet I would be the first to admit her unwarranted aggression against Belgium; and I'll admit only too gladly that the British fight gallantly, that the French fight magnificently, that the Russians fight stubbornly—that they are all brave, Germans and Allies alike, and that they are all heroic and tragic and pitiable. But if for no other reason, I'd like to see the Germans victorious just to confound these senseless fanatics who rave about the barbarous Huns and sneer at all things German, including German culture and valour in war!

Do you think my grandfather Moldenhauer was a barbarian just because he was born in Bavaria? Was he ever yellow? If you use your imagination I think you can understand how I feel sometimes when I read the New York papers.

Enough for the war! Maybe I've let a little vitriol creep in. If so, it isn't for you, Uncle, but for these others, these professional haters and lie-mongers—— Oh, there're plenty on both sides! Your letter was fine and sympathetic and generous; you understand, or at least try to. . . .

He paused again, frowning; and for some time appeared lost in reverie. "Yes," he whispered, "yes. . . ."

I've saved the thing I wanted most to say until the last. Will you do something for me? Next Thursday's the anniversary of Father's death. I wish you'd get a wreath or something for me for the grave. I enclose check—thanks, Uncle, a lot.

And thank you also for your courage and frankness in writing me as you did. Good-night,

As ever,
STUART.

"Oh, Gobie!" he called, after rising and stretching his cramped and weary legs and arms. There was still a tiny ribbon of light beneath the closed door of the other's cell-like bedroom;

there Gobie had his desk and shut himself up for lessons, correspondence, and such spasmodic literary work as his neglected muse deigned to evoke. The door—symbol of austere concentration—had been closed since nine o'clock; it had been closed much more frequently of late than during the old days, when they had done the greater part of their reading in the same room.

"Oh, Gobie!" Stuart repeated, clamorously. "Bedtime, Wilkinson! Time to eat." He opened the door and was immediately confronted by the other, who had risen from his desk.

"What's all the racket about?"

"It means that curfew has sounded, young man. Hurry up and grab your coat—we're going out to the quick-and-dirty for a sandwich. Did you get through that fifty pages of Bozzy?"

"About halfway. Haven't cracked the French, though."

"Fie, fie! What do you do with your time when I leave you alone? Do you want me to take cuts in the morning? What do you think I——" He broke off abruptly; something in Gobie's dejected, tired countenance made raillery seem out of place. "Come on, Gobie, let's get something to eat. A bit of air will do you good."

"I don't want anything to eat, Stu," returned the other, sinking down on the bed. "Let's turn in."

"Oh, come on! Just for the walk, then. I want to talk to you. Here's your coat—come, stick your arm in. What you been up to, Gobe?" He bent over the other with a clumsy, and at the same time affectionate, solicitude; there was an enormously compelling force in his good-nature. And he added, almost timidly, because he was secretly proud of the fact that Gobie "wrote": "Had any luck to-night with the muse?"

Gobie, always docile in the presence of this kindly compulsion, surrendered—as he nearly always did; he slipped into the coat. And the question completed his submission. "Haven't been able to write a thing lately," he replied. "Tried it to-

night, but the mood wouldn't come. Then instead of going back to Tink's assignment I started a letter to Mother." He sighed wearily. "Confound it, Stu, I don't seem able to get anything done any more."

"Oh, cheer up!" They closed the door of their dormitory room and started down the stairs. "You haven't any cause for complaint; you've done half 'The Age of Johnson,' which is just twenty-five pages more than I've done. Think how it'll refresh your mind to tell me about it while I eat! Then maybe we can find Doc or somebody who's read the last part of it."

"Say, what have *you* been doing all evening?"

"What have I been doing?" His tone implied pained surprise that such an irrelevant inquiry could find its way into their conversation. "Oh, busy—very busy! Writing a letter that I should have written long ago."

They walked on in silence across the deserted campus. It was a mild, damp evening in early November, and the grass and walks still shone wet under the roadway lights after a drizzling rain. They walked briskly, bare-headed as became men charged with the novel privileges and responsibilities of senior year; now and then peering up at the darkly overcast heavens and the occasional lighted windows in the underclassmen's dormitories at the quadrangle's opposite end—gray, prison-like Durfee, and the huddled piles of Farnam and Lawrence with their conical-peaked and ivy-covered turrets. In Gobie's mind these external impressions, so familiar and unremarkable, were scarcely impressions at all; they sank, dissolved and colourless, into an agitated ferment of conjecture that had been stirred and re-awakened by what he had just heard. "If he's been writing Helen, he couldn't be so cheerful," ran the ferment. "Still, the way he acted—has something on his mind. Maybe he's heard from her. Like to ask him—but no! Not unless it came this afternoon. None of my damned business, but I wish he'd confide in me as he used to. I don't believe it! Letter may be on his desk—may have left the envelope out—take a

look when we go back. Dishonourable? Mind your own business; can't you see he's had a rotten time? The best friend you've got, and you keep hoping—you fool! But he's grown so pig-headed the last few months—can't he *see?* There's a right and wrong to everything—even if you've got a German mother——"

"Hello, Jawn!"

"Hello, men of Yale."

A gray, nocturnal shape brushing past them on the long diagonal walk, a voice swallowed up, diminishing sound of tramp-tramp behind them. . . . Stuart's voice: "I'd take a cut in the morning, but I want to hear Tink's lecture. Fat chance I'll have of getting by that quiz! However—now just give me a summary of the high points . . ."

"Well, first, there's a lot about the Club. You know, the immortal circle, always dining somewhere. This time Boswell's taken in. Long description of the great honour, the distinguished membership—where they dined—what everybody said. Better get the membership down cold. Hell, there's no use trying to cover it now; wait till we get to the Royal. Better take a cut, Evans. Listen to that, would you!—Oh, here they come. . . ."

From Elm Street, drawing ever nearer, came a snatch of maudlin song, as some group of sophomoric revellers wended their uncertain but warmly fraternal way home:

> "Oh, it's glor—i—ous! Glor—i—ous!
> One keg of beer among the four of us!
> Glory be to God that there are no more of us,
> For one of us——"

The song broke off abruptly, the campus exerting a depressing influence on the spirits of the harmonizers. There were muffled exhortations for silence; strident protests; a richly alcoholic voice: "Shut up, you fellows. It's seniorsh!"

Four figures deferentially swayed against the wall, swept

past mutely in the shadow of the archway between Durfee and Wright.

Stuart laughed softly. "To think that we are reverenced! You'd think we were Toot and Jonesy, arm-in-arm. Suddenly sobered at the thought of our grandeur, and wondering if their precious careers have been queered by meeting us. Well, a couple of years ago we had the same notions, Gobie. Delightful irony, isn't it?"

"Wouldn't call it reverence so much as primitive drunken caution."

"Lovely irony, all the same. We're seniorsh, Gobie! Think of it." He laughed harshly; then, with an impatient gesture, flung away his cigarette. "Damn it all, why did we ever spoil it by coming back?"

"You're forgetting that the year's just begun, old boy," replied Gobie, with a compassionate sidelong glance. "Lots of good things coming—we're going to beat Princeton next Saturday, and after that Harvard. And——"

"Maybe we are. Pollyanna speaking—our fount of optimism. Never mind, I'll feel better after I've had something to eat. Only it won't make a hell of a lot of difference—the football won't—in the way I feel—about things in general."

"*Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born.* Hence, loathèd melancholy, while we eat a toasted bun! It seems I can't dissipate your heavy *Weltschmerz:* food is the only solvent. Well, here go my resolutions—let's eat!"

And he gave the order—Gobie who usually stood in the background and let Stuart attend to such prosaic details—with a sudden gaiety which was not lost on his companion. Stuart waited, grinning sheepishly; the reference to *Weltschmerz*—an excessively annoying word which Gobie had used on a previous occasion—had struck his sense of humour, though the effect was not altogether pleasant. Impossible to parry such a thrust, which indicated the other's unaccountable elation no less than the levity with which Gobie "summarized" his eve-

ning's reading. Impossible to fathom that corner of Gobie's mind which, while the rest of that mind expatiated on the famous tilt between Sir Joshua and the Great Cham, kept hugging the thought: "She hasn't written him! He couldn't be so miserable if she had written him!" Or that other voice of compunction: "You've no business feeling glad—you fool. Can't you be decent enough to respect his unhappiness? Can't you do something to help him?" But there was a flaccid will behind the voice; while the elation seemed fed from some inexhaustible hidden spring, which kept always welling up and threatening to flood over in a fresh and intolerable flippancy. He was eager to talk of everything in the world save the morrow's assignments, his knowledge of which was exhausted with a dozen sentences; and save the one topic nearest his heart, which he dared not broach. But Stuart was yawning long before they had finished their slight repast; Stuart appeared alternately sleepy and preoccupied. "Let's go to bed," he murmured, at one of Gobie's periods. "I shall take a most ignominious flunk in the morning, Wilkinson. Ho, hum—gee, but I'm sleepy—rotten reporter that you are. Never let *you* be my biographer; you've no talent for detail. No memory, either. No, my boy, you'd make a sorry Boswell. Come on."

Gobie sighed. "Such is gratitude. I help him squeeze through by the nape of his neck—I lift him out of the abysmal slough of his ignorance, and—wait a minute, you big bum, I haven't finished! A sorry Boswell, perhaps; who wants to be a Boswell? No, call me the reverse of Doctor Goldsmith—young Wilkinson, 'who talks like an angel, but writes like poor Pol.' Oh—now you've got me yawning. Caliban and Ariel; wit eclipsed with a yawn. Well, anyway, we've left the doldrums behind."

But it was only half true. Outside the restaurant a slow, remorseless drizzle had begun again; and pulling up their coat collars, they broke into a dogtrot which carried them rapidly back to the dormitory. Gobie cursed the rain; he thought:

"He was beginning to loosen up, just sleepy enough to talk—and if I'd had fifteen minutes more——"

In their sitting room Stuart paused uncertainly, and after wandering about a moment, stood against the fireplace and lighted a cigarette. It was a tacit preface to further talk and confidences; and Gobie, his back turned as he carefully hung up his coat, smiled a smile of satisfaction. "If you've got another cigarette, Evans," he ventured casually, "I might be induced to stay up a few minutes longer."

Stuart handed him the package, but seemed to have nothing to say. For a little both smoked in silence.

"Not worrying about that quiz to-morrow?" Gobie threw out.

"No." His face, meeting Gobie's smile, was entirely serious. "No, I was just thinking. . . . Hell, it's time to go to bed."

He began to undress listlessly.

"An excellent thought, Evans. You sometimes show astonishing perspicacity."

They undressed in silence, their discarded garments being deposited on armchairs, table, and mantelpiece. The sitting room, these cool mornings, served also as dressing room.

"You know, Gobie——"

Quickly: "Well?"

"I've been thinking a lot about—when I was a kid. I wrote my uncle a long letter to-night."

"Yes?"

"I got started on the war, and wrote a lot of stuff—— Pshaw! You know, Gobie, we're all so damned intolerant. Everybody is, on the war; I suppose I'm just as bad as the rest. Well, I got to thinking. You know, when I was a kid, Dad used to talk to me about being generous, and broad-minded, and all that sort of thing. It always made me mad, later on, when I thought of it—I mean, considering—well, you know what I mean. It always seemed just a sort of plea to excuse weakness and deceit and—cowardly indulgence. . . ."

Gobie sat down, and warmed his bare legs by the dying fire.

"Stu," he began, after a pause, "I never told you one thing, I guess. I don't remember much about my father—I was only five when he died. And your father—you know he was awfully nice to me, always. I remember his taking me once for a long ride, one summer when you and your mother were abroad. Do you recall—there used to be a drug-store on the corner of Oak and 13th Street. We stopped there and got a soda. Well, the old Jew—remember him?—he brought it out to us, and I was proud as a peacock, sitting up in the carriage and drinking my soda. Afterward . . . hmm . . . Well, little things like that may not amount to much, but when you look back on them they sometimes give you a better idea. . . . I've always been glad for those few little impressions and recollections of your father. And you . . . you have so many more, you know. You should be thankful, really."

Stuart had turned his head. "I wish I could forgive him," he said thickly; and rising, walked slowly toward his bedroom.

"Try to, Stu," returned the other, and closed his own door gently.

CHAPTER VIII

TENDER SEASON, TENDER CONSCIENCE

I

FOR both the room-mates, the Christmas holidays that year brought their usual welcome respite and—so great is the capacity of youth for living in the present—a certain felicity. All happiness is relative, and Stuart's and Gobie's was measurable at this time rather by the degree in which unhappiness was absent than by any positive joy; though Gobie, spending the two weeks in Columbus and seeing much of Helen, had moments which came near atoning for the intervening periods of dejection. The situation was simplified by Stuart's flight to Florida, where his mother had established a winter residence; and by the astonishing eagerness of mankind to comfort beautiful damsels who have recently broken an engagement, and by the damsels' equally astonishing ability to smile upon several comforters at the same time, and to dance countless hours with a broken heart. Where many girls would have sought refuge in travel or seclusion, Helen characteristically took a more aggressive course; rather than wait for time to lay the gossip, she chose to fight it with its own weapons, behaving as if there had never been an engagement and preferring the charge of heartlessness to wearing a bruised heart upon her sleeve. Let the old wives call her a frivol and a flirt, that was better than their pity. With the pride of a Beatrix Esmond, she charged into gaiety and courted their censure.

All this made matters easier for Gobie, but it certainly did not clarify them. Helen was obviously determined to forget

Stuart Evans, but was she any less in love with him? Was the affair between them really irreparably broken off? Gobie knew a little of what had happened (for which he blamed Stuart's mother) and that they were not writing each other; Stuart had twice given him categorical assurance that all was over; but Gobie was far from sure that he had any moral right to step in. Others were making that attempt, but they were not bound by Gobie's ties to the man they were so anxious to supplant. Nor had they, perhaps, Gobie's over-scrupulous conscience. Meanwhile there was the baffling fact of Helen's attitude to encourage and dishearten him. Her manner toward him gave him cause for hope; he felt that she had never been, with him, so close to the line where friendship turned to preference; and yet he suspected her gaiety and even her preference of being fictitious. There were times when he was certain of her heartache, times when he recalled Stuart's; and his compassion for them both extinguished utterly his personal identification of desire. He returned to New Haven more hopeless than when he had left, for it seemed to him that his duty to maintain a passive rôle had been only emphasized by the temptation to play the part of suitor.

Stuart got back a day later, glowing with a new sunburn and accounts of excellent golf scores at Miami, the Christmas present of a new car, and of a comparatively quiet visit during which he claimed to have danced but three times. He said he had had a bully time, and immediately asked Gobie about everyone in Columbus except Helen. Gobie told him first about Helen, and then about the objects of his inquiries, confining his information to state of health, mating tendencies or lack of them, and their interest, or lack of it, in the fact of Stuart's absence. He strove to provoke discussion—and failed. They dined together, talking haphazardly and rather laconically, joined a group headed for the movies, and returned to study diligently till nearly midnight. Within twenty-four hours they had slipped back into the old rou-

tine, with less reluctance but with the same distaste, and a sense of how quickly two weeks could slip into the limbo of the past.

II

Even for seniors, January assumed the symbol of a huge interrogation mark, ominous and challenging against the winter of their discontent. Mid-year examinations were upon them —nothing indeed for seniors, with their *savoir faire*, to grow concerned about, but none the less an ordeal. A month of questions, followed by the alluring prospect of Prom. week; questions about this and that course, about the merits of last-minute tutoring, about the law of diminishing returns as applied to intensive reviewing and the law of probabilities as applied to neglected assignments. Occasionally they were relieved by another type of question: "Are you going to the Prom.?" For while the Prom. to seniors shrank in significance beside the last year's event—just as the bogey of exams lost substance with each year—the fact of Prom. week could still not be ignored. It loomed with the same promise and interrogation as Easter, to a worldly woman, is wont to loom during Lent.

"Having any one on for the Prom., Gobie?" It was the third time this question had been posed that Gobie conceived the fatuous project of wiring Helen Thurlow.

A conception only—far too staggering to permit of immediate execution. On sober reflection, Gobie was rather horrified that his mind had been capable of such a generation. Bring Stuart and Helen face to face? The idea was preposterous, fantastic, and no doubt impossible besides. (It should be noted that while Gobie desired Helen's attendance from purely selfish motives, he had already begun to imagine himself a *deus ex machina* acting with the traditional detachment of an Eros.) He was to reconcile and re-unite the star-crossed lovers; he honestly believed—or at least the belief passed muster from his honest conscience—that if Helen and Stuart were left to themselves they would presently fall into each other's arms, and

—oh, naïve conscience!—that he, Gobie, would thereupon rejoice. He kept assuring himself that he felt terribly sorry for Stuart, and that he must help Stuart, and that he loved Helen with a brother's love, and that he placed Helen's happiness above all else, and that Helen would be far happier with Stuart than with Gobie (here his conscience sighed), and that nothing would make Gobie so happy as bringing them together (here his conscience groaned). "Why not?" he asked himself fiercely. Why not, indeed! Except for the fact that Helen would probably refuse to come and Stuart would undoubtedly refuse to stay, and that Gobie couldn't afford the expense in any case, there was no good reason.

He got around two of these difficulties—with pleasure at his ingenuity—by arguing that Stuart need know nothing until Helen's arrival, and that the hundred dollars his mother had given him at Christmas, plus another hundred to be borrowed and repaid out of heroic future deprivations, would cover the exigencies of his programme. Well, perhaps not quite—say, two twenty-five. A room for Helen at the Taft?—a chaperon? . . . Minor difficulties. There was Doc Churchill's party; Doc had a chaperon, and a room at the Taft, and a fiancée who knew Helen. A cinch! Would Doc keep his mouth shut, and could Gobie conceal his preparations from Stuart and persuade him to forego his three days in New York? Minor difficulties! There remained only the major obstacle of Helen herself, but with the faith and enthusiasm that support those embarked on giant undertakings, he already discounted the possibility of her refusal. Characteristically, he envisaged it all as a romantic adventure, as a sort of episode from the "Faerie Queene," wherein he was an errant knight engaged to slay the Giant Despair, and restore the lovely lady to her lord. (None of this mawkish Tennysonian chivalry, if you please, the "Idylls of the King" having long since been relegated to the literary level of football players and Sheff. men.) Characteristically, also, Gobie thought in lines such as, "Who dares not put it to the

test," and "If it were done, 't were well if 't were done quickly"; and having completed his arrangements with Doc Churchill, straightway dispatched a special delivery letter and a fifty-word telegram urging Helen to come.

He had, he felt, the Machiavellian touch; in his letter he wrote: "I'm awfully sorry that Stu won't be here, but he's all tired out and looks rather run down, and I think he needs to get away for a rest. By the way, when you write, address me care the Elizabethan Club, as I presume he knows your handwriting," etc.

With such a letter in the mail and with a telegram hourly expected, how was one to re-read Chaucer or brush up on the Mesozoic age?

But his suspense was of brief duration. Helen's wire read:

Awfully sorry would love to come but impossible. Letter follows.

After that, the promised letter seemed of quite secondary importance. He didn't know whether he was disappointed, or glad, or merely relieved.

Apparently that letter was either taking much time for its composition or the mails were being criminally retarded, since Gobie visited the Elizabethan Club eight times in three days before his expectation was finally appeased. When he saw it, neatly pinned up on the announcement board near the door, he had a strange sensation of vertigo; the letters of the address danced and swam, the postmark *Buffalo* was a myopic whirligig. Buffalo? Had she changed her mind, could it be that she was en route to New Haven after all? Not a week ahead of time, surely. . . .

There's nothing in the world I should love as much, Gobie, and you were a *dear* to ask me. But you see I got in a pickle—as usual!—by promising Irene Chadwick that I'd spend a week with her in Buffalo before going on to the Cornell Prom. and house parties with Art Freeman. Thank you a million times.—Oh, I wish I could come! . . . I am so sorry about Stu. Please take good care of him and see that

he doesn't work too hard at mid-years, and that he gets a good rest afterward. You were so nice to me at Christmas, Gobie, I'll never forget it. . . . Now, you'll laugh at this letter and say I haven't said anything, and I s'pose it's true, but I can't write letters like yours, Gobie, they're always such a mess—I mean mine are. You'll have to forgive me. I can't tell you how much I appreciate your asking me and I'd like to give you a big kiss for it.

Sincerely,
HELEN.

The figure in the empty reading room rested his head against the back of the tall Queen Anne chair, and stared out of the window down the snowy street. "Lord!" he whispered. Then he got up suddenly, crammed the letter into his pocket, and paced up and down the room. "Oh, you fool, you blithering, helpless, lucky fool!"

III

Always, of course, there was the war. The war had been dragging on and on, for years; it had become an accepted fact of the world's existence, as inescapable as the presence of winter or spring, and yet more distantly related to the individual life of man. Morning and evening, habitually, one read of the war, commented briefly on the war as one commented on the weather, felt a transitory emotion at the latest news—and returned to the business of existence. Even Stuart, though he still devoured two newspapers to Gobie's one, had felt the centripetal force of his absorption gradually dissipated by the centrifugal claim of other and more normal interests. It was appallingly evident that his world, his University, were carrying on very much as usual.

Indeed the second half of senior year was proving unexpectedly pleasant to both the room-mates. Little by little, the antagonisms aroused by Stuart's early espousal of the German cause had softened, evaporated, and been well-nigh forgotten; for to most of the class insincerity was the only unpardonable sin, and Stuart's sincerity was above question. One got accus-

tomed to all things, including the war and pro-Germans; abhorrence did not always turn to pity, but old friends could embrace even their differences in an easy tolerance. Tolerance, virtue of enlightenment—that and the sense of unity and fraternity won from four years together, with their ambitions ended and their snobberies dissolved, were their precious guerdons. And over them all, like the peaceful evanescent beauty of the lengthening spring twilights, sinking deep into their souls, lay the consciousness of something passing, something slipping away which they had grown to love and value, something of the spirit, intangible, effulgent, trailing clouds of glory—that untrammelled youth which they had shared together. All periods to happiness rend the human heart, and there is a peculiar pathos in the breaking of those happiest ties men ever form, the ties of college and of college friends. The approaching end brought them a kinder understanding of friendship, and the wistful wisdom of loving that which will soon be lost.

And the spring, so long awaited and so welcome after the long, incorrigible vileness of the New England winter, caressed the earth again. It came early, with the old voluptuous blandishments of warm moist April days and buds prematurely bursting, beguiling and sly and treacherous, as if bidding them forget past April snows. In happy conjunction with its first soft sunshine—and no less welcome—came the week of Easter vacation.

Since Helen's last letter—he had heard from her twice since the Prom.—Gobie had been counting the days. He felt very guilty about counting the days, and that insufferable conscience troubled him every time he thought of the clandestine correspondence; nevertheless, he continued to count and think. This seemed the more reprehensible in view of the fact that Stuart had invited him to spend the week in New York, holding forth the enticement of an orgy of theatre and opera-going at Augusta's expense, and that Gobie had declined. Nor was the offense adequately palliated by Gobie's panicky insistence

that Stuart give up the New York sojourn and accompany him home. The conviction grew on Gobie that his room-mate's mental, moral, and spiritual welfare hung as by a thread on a round-trip ticket to Columbus, and that Columbus itself could never survive this second truancy of Stuart Evans. What did it matter if Stuart's mother was away and her house in Columbus closed?—Stuart would stay with Gobie. To which that obstinate playgoer answered: "Don't be a nut, Gobie. I'm going to New York—and you know perfectly well it's all off between Helen and myself. You'd better be sensible and come with me."

Did that anæsthetize Gobie's conscience? Not at all. That conscience resisted chloroform and good advice like an old tomcat. There was only one person able to put the final quietus on it, and Gobie, notwithstanding its protests and alarms, was on his way to see her.

IV

Five days in all—deducting the time on trains and in New York—and three of the precious five had already passed. One of them, indeed, couldn't be counted at all, since the authorities of Cornell University had been guilty of the egregious blunder of letting one Arthur Freeman come home three days before Gobie, which fortunately meant that Arthur Freeman returned three days sooner than Gobie, but carried the heavy penalty of a full day devoted watchfully to seeing Arthur off. Still worse handicap—it chilled the first fine glow of Gobie's ardour (for Arthur was always on hand during those three days) and thereby allowed that conscience time to get on its guard. Not until the fourth day, then, did the immutable law which ordains two, and not three, as the common denominator of contentment, find full and unhampered expression.

A mild soft April day, beginning with a matutinal shower followed by clear sunshine and a breeze deceptively warm. Aware of the promise of later showers and of the sogginess of

golf courses, they quitted the country club, where they had lunched together, and went for an aimless country drive. And straightway they had left the club, and felt themselves swallowed up in the comfortable privacy of a motor on a lonely country road, Gobie lost the power of speech.

Was it because Helen appeared so ravishingly pretty, with that ruddy freshness in her cheeks and those stray locks which the breeze kept wantonly tangling about her neck and forehead? Because Helen herself seemed oddly thoughtful and laconic? Where now was that young Wilkinson who "talked like an angel" (to his room-mate) and wrote a little better than poor Pol?

Several times he swallowed hard, much as a deaf mute swallows before a supreme and futile effort, but the impediment was too great. Hopeless! As if that turgid, rushing current of thoughts, sensations, emotions, could be diverted into articulate utterance!

"You were such a peach to ask me for the Prom., Gobie"—Helen turning toward him, those blue eyes meeting his—"and I've never gotten over wishing I might have gone."

"Oh!" He tried, and choked—and after a long moment, achieved a feeble smile. "You probably had a better time at Cornell."

"Why do you say that?"

Desperately: "I—I don't know."

"Don't be silly, Gobie. You know I would have loved to come. It just happened that Art had asked me first—that was all."

He lost his tongue again.

"You ridiculous boy," she exclaimed softly. "Are you being jealous of Art? Because——"

His eyes left the road and darted a swift, beseeching glance, which she didn't understand.

"Because you've no cause, you know," she added, looking away.

The fool!—he drove on grimly.

"What a pretty road," she murmured, after a moment. "Let's stop, Gobie—I'll bet anything there're wild flowers in that woods. Violets, maybe crocuses, too." She touched his arm lightly as he brought the car to a stop. "Come—let's see what we can find."

She jumped out and he followed. He felt a giddiness as if he had suddenly climbed to some remote high altitude. Before them, barring their way, lay a wide ditch of muddy water with a grass bank beyond. She stopped, waiting, and he took her arm and helped her leap across. "These clinging skirts," she sighed. He still held her arm, could sense the warmth and fragrance of her body. But she drew away quickly, and unaided climbed over the split-rail fence at a space where one of the rails had fallen down.

"Come on, Gobie! Don't be afraid of getting your feet wet. Bet you I can find twice as many as you."

"I'd rather watch you," he replied; and it was true. He saw the damp, bare trees but incidentally, and the soggy beds of old leaves, and the long wet grasses where an occasional violet lurked hidden away; and while she moved from spot to spot, stooping quickly and rising to wander on, his eyes followed her fondly, drinking in the eager joy which lighted up her face at each new discovery. She had gathered two large bunches of the violets before he had a dozen; his feet lagged, the rich, wet sweetness of the woods and earth invaded his senses, and he felt a delicious languor and contentment mingling oddly with a sense of pain. If only that dull load were off his heart! . . . "Oh! you've no eye for violets," Helen exclaimed, as they made their way back. She laughed gleefully. "What a sorry bunch you've got! Ah, they're so fragrant!—I love them like this, when they're fresh and wet. They've always been my favourites, you know."

It was strange—his mind flew back to that night of Stuart's dance, when she had removed his corsage of violets to wear

the orchids. He looked at her quickly, wondering if perchance the same recollection had crossed her mind, but there was no mistaking the cloudless candour of those blue eyes. Then he looked ruefully at his own slender bunch; and the troubled expression of his face suddenly struck her as comical. "I didn't mean to call them a sorry bunch," she laughed. "They're really lovely, Gobie—in your bunch one can see the loveliness of each single violet! What can you expect, when you're so afraid of wet feet? Here, don't stand there looking as if you didn't know what to do with them! Don't you know I especially want the ones you picked?"

He handed them to her, saying simply: "If I'd known that I would have picked more, Helen," and helped her into the car.

Silent, she sat deftly sorting and arranging the flowers. Instead of starting the motor, he leaned back calmly against the seat.

"You spoke of the Prom., Helen. Would you have come on if you'd been able to, and if you'd known Stu was to be there?"

She regarded him blankly. "But you told me Stu wasn't going to be there."

"He wasn't, as it turned out. But—tell me frankly, Helen, would you have come?"

He was watching her intently. She let the violets fall apart in her lap, raised her face, which was frowning, stared straight ahead of her down the road, and suddenly gave an odd little laugh. Still she did not answer.

"Please be frank," he urged.

"Did it ever occur to you, Gobie," she said at length, "that it wasn't quite fair of you to ask me to the Prom.—under the circumstances? If that never occurred to you, why then I suppose—— I don't want to hurt you, but really——!" She shook her head.

"But it did occur to me, Helen. Please! Let me explain——"

Hapless youth, to have embarked on that disastrous theme!

He explained; he blurted out the whole story. The diabolical conscience had triumphed, after all!

"I see," said Helen, when he had made an end. "You simply wanted to play the part of peacemaker between Stu and me. Is that it?"

"I thought you still cared for each other, Helen."

She was silent, and he thought: "I gave her a chance to deny it, and I was right after all."

Could she believe in such incredible naïveté? She was wondering if Stu still loved her enough to put Gobie up to such a thing.

CHAPTER IX

MAY 7, 1915

I

GOBIE, bearing a heavy suitcase and wearing a starched white collar (sure harbinger of travel), walked out of the courtyard of Vanderbilt and crossed Chapel Street in the direction of the Taft. It was almost three o'clock of a warm, spring-like May afternoon, the first Saturday of the month, and Gobie's elation at the prospect of his first week-end in New York since February was dampened, but not extinguished, by his knowledge of having missed the two-fifteen express and of facing a three-hour trip on the later "accommodation." Why worry about such a detail, when there was a chance—one of the delightful hazards of street-car locomotion in New Haven—of missing the three o'clock as well, which would mean taking the four-fifteen, an excellent train and arriving quite early enough. A taxi, to catch an accommodation train? Not when you were doing a theatre and a New York hotel on $20.65 and a round-trip fare! Gobie glared contempt at the taxi-stand across the street, and dumped his suitcase on the sidewalk corner.

Why did he have to miss that early train, which all the crowd had taken? Confound it, he had hurried enough! All he'd done was hurry, ever since he'd gotten up that morning. Good thing Stu wasn't there to give him the laugh. As if Stu knew anything about catching trains, with his new Simplex, which he'd had the indecency to drive to Princeton for the baseball game the day before—the lucky, bloated plutocrat! Yet another evidence of the indulgent partiality of fate: Stu had no Saturday classes, Gobie had two. Reflecting on this, and

failing to see a car marked "Station" among the three that were approaching, Gobie swore.

Beastly, lonely place, the University on a Saturday afternoon! A few benighted underclassmen pottering about like lost souls, the Campus and dormitories deserted, the same old downtown streets and the same old shops beginning to fill up with the same sickening crowds of townspeople, the same lack of friendly faces, the same throng of shop girls hastening to see Frances X. Bushman in the movies or the stock company matinée idol at the *Hyperion*—thrice-dismal, dreary, tedious place in which to spend a perfect May afternoon! (Ten of three; he would surely miss that train.) William Butler Yeats and Masefield for the ride down; might just as well read on the train as in his room, and it would take some time to finish "Dauber." If it weren't such a dreary hole—no, not give up the week-end now. . . . Hello, what was the matter down the street?

A commotion on the next corner, sidewalk loungers gathering in little groups, a ragged newspaper boy, shouting. . . .

Gobie sat on his upturned suitcase, the extra fallen across his knees, and stared numbly, with unseeing eyes, at the stone and brick reality of his world. Two words, the two words of the newspaper headline: *Lusitania Torpedoed!* A street car marked "Station" had just passed, but Gobie had not seen it.

After a little he picked up the suitcase and walked slowly back to his room, where he left it, unopened, by the door. Then he flung open the windows, and stretched himself at full length on the window seat. Still holding the folded paper in his hand, he gazed out on the new-leaved elms of the campus, and the green grass, and the familiar ivy-grown buildings he had loved. He lay there for a long time.

II

Stuart came back to New Haven the following evening, after the most bewildering twenty-four hours he had ever lived.

His first emotion at hearing of the *Lusitania's* sinking had been an agonized unbelief. There was some mistake; it was impossible to credit the testimony of those few passengers brought into Queenstown, who, like all nerve-shattered survivors of a terrible experience, doubtless had a distorted recollection of what had occurred. To the grimly indignant members of the baseball squad he said little or nothing—he had learned to keep his own counsel; but in his own mind he said it was not a torpedo but a floating mine. Surely a mine! The waters about the British Isles had been strewn thick with these uncontrolled engines of destruction, one of which had sunk a British dreadnaught. That was it, of course! The Germans might be capable of invading Belgium, but never of such wanton, insane savagery as deliberately torpedoing an ocean liner with hundreds of influential Americans on board.

Then the later extras, and the evening editions, with their circumstantial accounts not only from passengers but seamen as well, of having seen the wake of a torpedo. And that overpowering current of white-hot anger and feverish calm which flowed like some elemental energy through the endless crowds, through all those agitated millions, through the teeming streets and the sultry, portentous air! It meant war; no one who pushed his way down Broadway that night, no one who took part in those spontaneous demonstrations in the theatres, could doubt that it was war. By an ominous coincidence, the Atlantic fleet had that day anchored in the Hudson River, and there were thousands of sailors on the uptown Manhattan thoroughfares. Groups of sailors, arm-in-arm, carefree and weatherbeaten and exultant, swarmed up and down Broadway. Now and then one of them would be held up by the crowds; there were cheers, well-intentioned but clumsy ovations. Once someone in the throng below Times Square, taking advantage of the lull that followed one of these demonstrations, struck up the "Star-Spangled Banner." A few joined in, reached the second bar, and stopped; there were jeers and catcalls, and a

good-natured chaffing. Stuart's sense of the ridiculous was too keen not to feel annoyance and a certain revulsion before such abortive attempts at patriotic abandon. They did outrage to his own feelings—feelings of anxious sorrow, of a leaden despair. Only in the theatre, when that hushed crowd stood up as the orchestra played the first note of the National Anthem —not trying to sing, thank God—did he feel that tragic exaltation which springs from conflict and the sense of sharing a deep and noble emotion with one's fellow men.

With the morning papers came certitude—to his mind—of the event. It attained reality; it had happened, there was no longer question of the torpedo. With few exceptions the editorial note was the same throughout the press—an expression of horror, a stern demand for satisfaction, and that failing, war! Stuart spent two hours reading every front page, every editorial, every article bearing on the *Lusitania* or the war. There was no crumb of comfort or relief anywhere, save in the hypothesis that the *Lusitania* had carried a huge cargo of war munitions (which the German Embassy claimed and the Cunard offices denied); but even to Stuart, anxious as he was to absolve the Germans, the contention rang false. Though he tried to believe it, and indeed refused to admit his skepticism even to himself, his inmost conscience knew it for a palpable lie.

Suppose the ship had carried munitions, did that condone the brutal callousness of the deed? "An inhuman devil drunk with the fiendish possibilities of his weapon, and acting on his own initiative"—as such he pictured the U-Boat commander. They should hang him; at the very least, the German Government would surely disclaim responsibility for his monstrous crime. And yet—there was the disturbing evidence of that "warning" issued by the German Embassy before the *Lusitania* had sailed. There was this tale about munitions. They revived those old dismaying doubts he had had, six months before, as to the present integrity and sanity of the German nation.

"I suppose it means war," he thought; and wondered about his mother and what she would do in case America went in. Face to face with that possibility, he felt an increase of compassion for her. "All the crowd of course would go, and I—— God knows!" The thought of himself, Stuart Evans, enrolled to fight the Germans, was stupefying. No, however callous the German leaders, however criminal the acts of a few individual Germans, he could not entertain the notion of killing those whose life he had lived, and whose blood ran in his mother's veins and his own. He could only pray that it might not come to war.

About ten o'clock Dick Farabee, captain of the baseball team, entered his room, wading through the litter of papers on the floor. He was quite casual, and inquired briefly of Stuart's plans for the day. "I thought if you weren't doing anything this afternoon, we might drive out and take a squint at the fleet."

"Thought you had a date with your girl," Stuart objected.

"Not till later. We can go right after dinner. By the way, have you heard anything from Gobie?"

"Not a word."

"Funny, isn't it?"

Stuart nodded. "Why not get the car and drive out now?" he submitted.

"Why——" Farabee appeared somewhat at a loss. "Wally said something about going to church, and I thought I'd join him. Want to come along?"

"No, thanks. Do you think I cut chapel just to go to church in New York? When did religion strike Wally?"

Farabee grinned and shrugged. "Said he wanted to see the inside of St. Luke's. Well—we'll see you later."

Singular phenomenon! Stuart stared incredulously as Farabee closed the door.

Were they really going, Stuart asked, because the *Lusitania* had been sunk and war was imminent? Bah! A little too

consciously in the grand manner, smacking of pose. Yet Farabee and Wally were as free from cant and affectation as any in the class. Strange how some men reacted to emotional stress.

He fell to wondering about himself, and why it was that he, whose mother was so devout, should feel a skeptical irreverence in the presence of religion and all the traditional forms of worship. Was he temperamentally incapable of piety, of religious emotion, of awe? A mocker—and yet troubled with a capacity for high seriousness in other things? Perhaps the trouble lay with his environment, in the materialism of his world: but no! other men, however ungodly, were occasionally quickened by that reverential impulse to which he seemed dead—witness Wally. Ungodly? . . . Well, not quite so bad, merely afflicted with a liking for inebriation between baseball seasons. His own early training, perhaps—too much religion when he was a kid, and all that sort of thing. But his father had always interceded to save him from an overdose. . . .

His father? It was the first time in months he had thought of his father.

He suddenly remembered how they had gone off together that time when his mother believed him in Sunday-school, and talked a great deal, and run a race. . . . Damn it all, why did he have to think of such things now? Better for his father had his mind dwelt a little more on religion and less on other women! Maybe he really loved her, as Uncle Arthur said. Love? What was the sense of it, why did men have to be tortured with desire? Oh, Lord—thinking of Helen again. . . .

He got up, doused his face with cold water, and left the room. If it weren't so late he'd try to overtake Farabee and Wally and go to church with them. Never mind, he'd find someone to join him in a walk.

In the afternoon four of them drove out Riverside Drive, surveying the long gray line of battleships anchored in the river and excitedly discussing—all save Stuart—what each

would do when war was declared. Wally was attracted by the navy, Farabee, by aviation, Holmes thought one would have a better chance of seeing action with the Canadians or British than with the pitifully inadequate American Army, which "wouldn't make a decent drop in the bucket." "Hell, we don't need an army," remarked Farabee; "we've got a Bryan for a dove of peace—and a whole gang of nice Sunday-school pacifists in Washington. They'll probably threaten to slap Germany on the wrist." But in the next breath he spoke of war as a foregone conclusion. On that point they were all agreed.

Thousands of people filled the park along the Palisades, and all the streets leading to the river, from the upper sixties to the Bronx and beyond, were dense with auto traffic and crowds of excited and perspiring foot passengers, men and women and children, whole families, combining their Sunday outing with a pilgrimage to see the nation's only offensive fighting force that was worthy of the name. There were frowsy, giggling girls in quest of sailors, and dark-skinned foreign women and children, and idle young men, and anxious-faced women talking with husbands and sons, and serious people speaking earnestly of war, and careless, noisy groups of picnickers. Stuart wondered what war would mean to all this eager, strangely assorted, pulsating flotsam and jetsam called humanity; wondered how many of them realized, how many cared. He had ceased to listen to his companions, though their comments and conjectures still echoed in his ears; and he was thankful that the absorbing task of guiding the car through the thronging avenues afforded an excuse for silence, and a check upon the pent-up turmoil of his soul. War . . . and all his friends fallen away, gone to fight Germans, to kill and to be killed . . . all these multitudes thrown into the maelstrom, stirred to hate, pledged to bitterness, and sorrow, and suffering . . . all this abounding life, so thoughtless, so quick to joy and pain, so bright, crucified. . . .

"I want to tell you one thing," Wally was saying, "it won't be any joke—this war."

"Not on your sweet life it won't!" returned Farabee. "But good God, what a relief to be able to *do* something. . . ."

The eternal challenge of a call to arms! It would be hard to hang back then, with friends in uniform, and bands playing, and the tramp of marching men. . . . His mother. . . . But if it came to that, as it must come, he would stay behind.

He declined invitations for tea and the evening, and started back to New Haven, with Holmes, at four o'clock. He drove like mad, covering the ninety miles in two hours and a half, slowing down only in the towns and causing even the imperturbable Holmes an occasional gasp at his disregard of traffic and sharp curves. Grimly and in silence, they watched the road stream under them with vertiginous speed. Once Holmes shouted: "What's all the rush about?" For answer Stuart shrugged. It was a relief to leave the city, those crowds, behind; it was as if he were fleeing from the war and from the intolerably oppressive burden of his mind. A little before seven, he opened the locked door of his dormitory room.

Gobie had gone out to supper, but it was evident that he had been there sometime during the afternoon; a copy of Masefield's poems lay on his armchair, and on his desk his open fountain pen and a sheet of letter paper. Stuart glanced at the latter, thinking his room-mate might have left a note, but there was only a date line at the top, and the words "Dear Mother." Rejoining Holmes he headed for the dining room of the Taft. He was glad to be back in the college atmosphere, and to sense the quiet peace of the Sunday eventide; it was pleasant to be greeted by the few other students in the dining room, and congratulated on the baseball victory—which Stuart had almost forgotten—and to recall the game itself as they lingered over their meal. The spell of the old interests, the primary claim of their own compact and coherent world, had revived; and for half an hour they viewed the universe

again from the comfortable vantage point of collegiate sport. Then they parted, for both had assignments, and Stuart was secretly anxious to see his room-mate alone.

Gobie was back—he was bent over his desk, writing, as Stuart entered the room. For a moment he gave no sign of having heard the door, or his room-mate's progress across the sitting room to his small study-bedroom. Not until the other had reached his chair did Gobie look up.

"Hello," he said quietly, with a smile. "I saw your bag, so thought it must be you. Have a good week-end?"

"Rotten." Stuart sat down on the bed, a long, angular figure of limp dejection. "First part wasn't so bad—down at Princeton. You know about the game, of course."

Gobie nodded, and a gleam of enthusiasm suddenly lighted his earnest face. "Darn nice work, Stu! I noticed you got a two-bagger and a single."

"Everyone played a good game."

"Wish I'd seen it. . . . Hellish nuisance, to have Saturday classes."

That did for the game. There was a pause. Gobie regarded with wide-open eyes the tip of Stuart's shoe.

"Writing a letter?" Stuart asked.

"To Mother."

Stuart leaned forward, as if to simulate a willingness—which he by no means felt—to leave the room. "Go ahead, Gobie—I won't bother you." Still he did not rise.

"Sit still, you big giraffe!" Stuart grinned—and leaned back.

"I wasn't making much headway with it, anyhow," Gobie offered.

Another pause. "Lord, I'd like a cigarette about now," sighed Stuart. "Certainly will be glad when training's over."

Gobie pushed back his chair. Stuart sat up again, suddenly resolute, and coughed. "Why didn't you come down, Gobe?" he demanded.

Their eyes met for an instant; then like a pair of bashful schoolgirls, each dropped his gaze. "Why"—Gobie began, and cleared his throat—"I missed my train, and—hell, I don't know."

"Sure, I understand. I felt the same way."

That helped matters, somehow; it was easier to go on. "How was New York?" Gobie asked.

"War-crazy."

"Hmm. . . ." After a silence: "What do you think about the whole thing, Stu?"

"Lord! I don't know. It's war, I guess."

"You think so, too?" His voice was eager, his eyes shone brightly. "Lord," he said softly, staring at the lamp; as if in a daze before the magic incantation of the word Stuart had pronounced. After a moment he roused himself, with a visible effort. "I suppose—you feel pretty tough—that is——"

"Well—yes, I do."

His eyes, Gobie noticed quickly, were staring at the floor.

"Damned sorry, old fellow," Gobie said queerly.

The sprawling figure on the bed stirred with a sudden tremor, a long arm twitched, rose, and fell back; he tried to speak, and coughed. "Hell—there's no use thinking about it," he said at length.

Gobie fumbled for a cigarette, and took a long time lighting it. "Stu, you won't mind my asking you a question," he said, as if stating a fact.

Dully: "Shoot."

"You're more American than anything else, aren't you?"

Stuart's eyes—surprised, resentful—met his. "Certainly," he said curtly. He sat up with a sudden jerk. "Let's not start about the war, Gobie. No use going into all that again. I don't accuse you of being any less an American because you sympathize with France and England. I don't accuse you of being a foreigner at heart just because you want the Allies to win. It ought to work both ways."

"That's not the point, Stu." He had flushed, and his lip trembled—it always trembled, like a girl's, before the prospect of a heated argument or quarrel. "I'm not talking about the past—that doesn't matter. As long as we were out of the war everyone, I suppose, had a right to think as he pleased. But if it's war between America and Germany——"

"Do you think I don't see that?" Stuart fiercely broke in.

"Well, that's all I wanted to know," said Gobie with a strange expression on his face.

But Stuart, incensed with his room-mate and angry at himself for being incensed, had risen and crossed the narrow space between the bed and doorway. On the threshold he paused, and faced Gobie. "Then you're another one of them that's—that's *glad!*" he burst out. "You're just *praying* for war, aren't you? Damn it, man, can't you see what war will mean?"

"Yes," said Gobie, who also had risen. His dark, earnest eyes burned with a feverish brilliance in his pale face. "I see what it will mean. I'm not glad about the *Lusitania*, if that's what you mean. God forbid! But since it's happened, I believe it's for the best. Yes—and I hope it's war! If we aren't men enough now to go in and *fight*, and whip those dirty bastards that have murdered women and children and——" The livid torrent choked him; he was trembling violently from head to foot. . . . "Oh, God, Stu, why can't you see the thing as the rest of us see it!"

But the agonized petition was addressed less to his room-mate than to some unseen presence; for Stuart had left the room. Gobie heard him striding across the sitting room, heard a book slam on Stuart's desk; glanced out, and saw him, scowling darkly, as he made for the outer door with a pair of textbooks in his hand. The door slammed.

Gobie sat down heavily in his chair, and stared at the wall ahead. But after a time he lifted his head, and in a low voice began to sing:

"*Allons! enfants de la patrie* . . ."

CHAPTER X

ENID GETS A LETTER

PUSHING back her old-fashioned sunbonnet and transferring the rose she had just clipped to her other hand, Enid Wilkinson stood up and proceeded down the garden path in the direction of the postman's whistle. It was a Wednesday morning in late May, and Enid was expecting that letter which at least once a week made the post's arrival an event—Gobie's weekly bulletin from New Haven, which should have come the day before. She quickened her step as she saw the gray-clad figure with his heavy leather pouch descend from her front porch and cross the street.

She hurried, but immediately assured herself that there was no occasion for hurry, that it wouldn't matter if the letter were further delayed—which was more than possible when her son was so busy during the closing weeks of college. She told herself it would make no difference; yet the contradictory knowledge that her day would be ruined by a second disappointment weighted down her steps. No news might be good news, to be sure, and she would be thankful for any interests which interfered with his regular correspondence, if only they distracted him likewise from this feverish excitement about the war. But surely the postman must have left a letter! And she brightened as she thought that the worst suspense was over; the dark anxiety of those first days after the *Lusitania*, when her son had exulted in the prospect of an avenging America taking up the German challenge. How fearfully she had watched the papers, and with what despondent premonitions she had read of Bryan's resignation because he could not sanction a note to Germany.

But nothing had happened, after all; her prayers had been answered, the nation had swallowed its pride, the Government was possessed of Christian meekness. . . .

What a beautiful morning it was, and how fragrant were the old lilac bushes along the walk. That rhododendron was coming into flower . . . the grass needed weeding there in front, along the iron fence. She would have to get that old Italian to come over for a few days' work in the yard, since Charles was always too tired after business—or else going off somewhere. And those shutters, and the porch . . . well, they would have to wait for paint until next year, when Gobie would be out of college. Money again. . . . If she could only give him something nice for Commencement, instead of spending so much to go East herself—but that was his own fault, the dear boy, for insisting on her coming. Ah, there was something in the box.

A little exclamation escaped her as she recognized her son's handwriting, and taking off the bonnet she moved quickly into the cool shadowy old parlour, where, not waiting to sit down, she tore open the envelope and began to read.

After some little time, when she still held the letter in her lap, her eyes absently fell on the roses she had cut that morning and left on the table by the door; she moved across the room and put them in a vase, quite automatically and without perceiving that the vessel lacked water. Then she read the letter through again; though before she reached the last page she stopped, dreadful and shrinking at those last paragraphs. . . .

I know you'll approve, Mother, and that you won't worry, because it's the safest thing we could possibly do. Driving an ambulance at the front isn't quite my idea of something to go into heroic transports about; we don't rank as combatants, we'll never get a crack at the Huns, and if we see the artillery at work and hear an occasional shell burst we'll be lucky. But it will be doing something, at any rate—a poor substitute for what we ought to do, but since the Government seems quite determined to make us the jellyfish among nations—while we fatten and grow rich out of the war—it looks as if there's

nothing else available. Now, Mother, remember this: that I would have gone in any case; and be thankful, if you wish to consider only my safety and nothing else, that I have chosen this course.

Farabee, Holmes, and I went down to New York last Saturday and were accepted. We shall sail probably about the end of June, some time after Commencement, so I'll probably have a chance to come home with you for a few days before we go.

Stu and I are on the best of terms again—I didn't write you about the row we had over the *Lusitania*, but we had one—and I think if it weren't for his mother he might even be persuaded to join us. Under the circumstances I can't urge him, but I'd give anything to have him with me. You said his mother had been very indiscreet—do you mean that she actually defended the sinking? I have tried not to feel toward her as I do; but I fear I lack your tolerance, Mother, and charity of mind—just as she lacks your unselfish courage and your clear insight into fundamental things—and your devotion to the cause of humanity and justice. For I know when you think this over you will be very glad to have me do this little, which is all we can do at this time. . . .

She wiped her eyes, and folding the letter tenderly, laid it against her breast. She tried to realize what it would mean, his going away within a month. . . . But she could not think; her stunned and aching mind recoiled before the vast uncomprehended significance of what he faced, of what she must face—she whom he had called courageous and unselfish. And her heart cried: "Oh, what have I ever done that he should think thus of me!"

Later, after she had composed herself and ascended to her room on some little errand that had occurred to her, she glanced out of the window and remarked Augusta's limousine drawing up beside the curb—Augusta getting out, alone.

On this morning, of all mornings! She ran quickly to the back stairs. . . .

"Mary—tell Mrs. Evans that I'm not at home."

CHAPTER XI

COMMENCEMENT

I

AT ITS very best, Commencement would probably have bored Augusta. Whether or not Commencement that year was at its best, it is certain Augusta was not at hers. She had come on to New Haven from a "cure" in New York State, whither she had repaired early in June, afflicted with that type of illness which may be ridiculed at a distance, but is anything but ridiculous at close range. Not to herself alone, but to Stuart and the Wilkinsons, her present dyspepsia was a serious matter. At the end of the third day she left, attended by Stuart's hopes that her ensuing sojourn at the cure prove more beneficent than those salubrious waters she had drunk before coming. Her behaviour in New Haven had left a degree of skepticism in his mind as to the efficacy of the treatment, but none as to the advisability of isolating her, at least for the time being, from her friends.

At Commencement they had had their first serious quarrel—a quarrel arising out of his attempt to restore amity between his mother and the Wilkinsons. Arthur Evans, to whose presence he had looked as a harmonizing influence, had at the last moment disappointed him. However, the early arrival of Gobie's mother—two days before Augusta's—had enabled him to see much of her and provide against that neglect which he feared as inevitable after the latter's coming. The interlude was comparatively pleasant; he had enjoyed driving the Wilkinsons about and taking his meals with them; but he could not escape

a presentiment of strain inspired by the shadow of parting and Enid's fragile effort to preserve a brave demeanour. Her ill-concealed unhappiness gave him an odd feeling of responsibility toward her, and rendered the rudeness of his own mother—when she finally came and refused to see Mrs. Wilkinson—the more malign and provoking.

From the outset he had tried to make allowances for her indisposition. But a series of disagreeable sneers and refusals ended by exhausting his patience; and when she abused Gobie to him for going overseas, and upbraided her own son for wishing to bid the *Rochambeau's* volunteers *bon voyage*, it was too much! He had spoken his mind plainly, there had been words on both sides—though out of respect for her illness he had refrained from probing what he knew was the secret ulcer of her mind, her bitterness over the *Lusitania*. For the first time in his recollection, he had been immensely thankful when she left him. A few hours later Gobie and his mother had departed for Columbus, where the former was to spend three days before returning to the East prior to sailing.

Stuart drove them to the train. More than anything else, more than all the dreary solemnity of the exercises, that short ride through the downtown streets brought home to him the end of college. For him it possessed the beauty and melancholy of all last performances of trivial commonplace acts. And Mrs. Wilkinson, he knew, felt the same wistful sadness, beneath her cheerful and calm exterior. Only Gobie appeared untroubled by such sentimental ruminations; Gobie's gaiety was not put on, it was the authentic expression of immense satisfaction with the universe. The station, the long wooden platform, were crowded with departing students and their families, but the noise and confusion seemed to exhilarate Gobie as it depressed and silenced his companions. "Why don't you come back with us, Stu?" he coaxed; and Stuart reflected that it was very like Gobie to coax him in full sincerity, for all the obvious fact that if Stuart went he would be only in the way. Gobie would see Helen, of

course. . . . No, Stuart couldn't leave New Haven for several days; he'd have to see about getting their furniture packed up, and had promised Dick Farabee the week-end in Hartford; but it wasn't good-bye, he'd get down to New York sometime before the sailing. Gobie would be there several days, wouldn't he, getting his passport and other papers? . . . He plied the other with questions, the answers to which he had known for days, in a desperate effort to forestall the emotionalism of their thanking him. But those last moments were less oppressive than he had feared—only Mrs. Wilkinson had brought a lump to his throat by kissing him good-bye. . . .

Feeling utterly lonely, he joined a party of old grads and new grads that evening, and got thoroughly drunk in the best reunion manner.

There followed two days of carnival and headaches. He conceived the happy project, among various others during those two days, of inviting large numbers of genial elderly gentlemen to see the boat races with him aboard the *Valkyrie;* he pledged himself to accompany a party of Sheff. men to the San Francisco Exposition in a private car; he was elected an honorary life member of the Cooks' Club and the Savin Rock Scullers' Society, attended the Senior Prom. without complications or consequences, arranged for the shipment of Gobie's furniture, and donated his own to a kind-hearted waiter in the act of putting him to bed. On the morning of the third day a headache of exceptional intensity was not alleviated by his very vivid impression that he had made a fool of himself; nor by a confused recollection of a contrite and affectionate telegram sent his mother; nor by the knowledge that he was driving the Farabees—Dick, Dick's mother and father and maiden aunt—to Hartford that afternoon. Remorse—that vitriolic remorse induced by memory and alcoholic poisoning, made the morning a hell. After lunch he felt better. Cautious inquiry gradually undermined the conviction of irreparable disgrace and ruin. It was the opinion of eyewitnesses of varying degrees of compe-

tence that he had conducted himself with unusual, if occasionally amusing, decorum; and that his sole claim to public distinction lay in an attempt to lead the orchestra at the Prom. By three o'clock he was ready to face the Farabees with brazen and unrepentant calm. . . .

That night in Hartford, after a dance, he wrote his mother a long and sympathetic letter, in which he promised to stop over and see her at Watkins Glen, en route to Columbus. He thought he would go home to look over the ground for a possible business opening, etc., after he had seen Gobie off. He also started a letter to Helen Thurlow, but tore it up after two idiotic pages.

II

"But you'll come back, won't you, Gobie, when the six months are up?"

They sat at opposite ends of the cushioned swing on the Thurlows' side porch, and the darkness which had just closed down after the late June twilight increased their sense of intimacy. It was nine o'clock of Gobie's last evening in Columbus; he had divided it between Helen Thurlow and his mother, dining with the latter at the expense of refusing a signal honour —for the Thurlows rarely admitted Helen's suitors to the family board. To miss dinner with Helen's family was, however, a small sacrifice; the greater measure of his filial devotion lay in his promise to return for a little final visit with his mother before bedtime.

Helen's question recalled him from a momentary silence—he had just been wondering about the time.

"In six months, Helen?" he returned slowly. "Why, no . . . I hardly expect to get back so soon."

The high canvas side of the swing threw her face in shadow, an obscurity deepened by the dim oblong radiance of the doorway beyond, leading to the lighted living room; but the tremor of the swing, as she sat upright, betrayed her surprise.

"But you only have to stay six months. You won't stay longer than you have to?"

"Why, I thought . . . of course I didn't dare let on to Mother. You see, Helen, what I wanted to do"—he stopped, hesitant on the brink of so important a confidence, and afraid lest his thought, too frankly uttered, might sound vainglorious—"was something rather different," he ended.

"Oh, yes, I know! You wanted us to get into the war. We all felt that way, Gobie—for awhile. But it's such a terrible war, and there're so many people in this country who don't feel as we do—so many pro-Germans. . . . Yes, and so many people who seem absolutely indifferent . . . just as you said last night to Dad when you talked about Roosevelt and the need of leadership. I can't put it very well, but it seems to me sometimes that it's just as well we aren't in it, the country is so divided. . . ." He sat up jerkily, and she hurried on: "I know you won't agree with that, and of course, Gobie, I wish it were different, too—I wish we had a President who instead of writing notes would get up and *do* something! But since we aren't in it, why . . . you won't stay, will you?"

He did not answer at once, but lighted a cigarette; and in the flare of the match she had a fleeting picture of his face, sombre and curiously contracted; and his eyes, as he raised them to the light—was it a fancy that they seemed preoccupied and dreaming of faraway things? "I'm afraid I shall, Helen," he answered gently.

"But, Gobie—why? Six months is a long time—it's long enough. Oh, I know how you feel, how anxious you are to be of service! And I, we all admire you so much for feeling that way. But we'll miss you—a lot. . . ."

The tiny point of his cigarette glowed brighter as he flicked the ash off thoughtfully; but he was silent. She waited a moment, debating whether to give her appeal a more personal significance, but remembering that strange expression on his

face, shifted her ground. "It wouldn't be quite fair to your mother, you know."

"You think not?" There was a queer inflection in the voice; he sank back and inhaled deeply of his cigarette. "I've considered all that, Helen." He pondered a moment, then went on slowly: "One's duty to his family, his mother—don't think I'm not sensible of it, or that I don't love my mother—as much as any one could. But when it's war, you're—you're in the grip of something—some force, that sets aside everything you've thought and done, and wanted to do before. It doesn't matter how terrible the thing is, or how hard. It's so much bigger than you that—I don't know whether I can make you understand the way I feel. It catches you up above everything that used to seem important; it makes you realize there's a purpose—where there didn't seem to be any before. That's why men will always go."

"But, Gobie, it isn't *our* war."

"It is our war! Just because we have a President who doesn't see it and millions of dull-souled clods who—whose imaginations have not yet quickened to it . . . But they will, Helen! They will; they won't be able to help it. It's bigger than they, bigger than all the inertia and selfishness and stupidity in the world!" He had risen, and stood over her gesticulating with his arm, so that the cigarette darted in the gloom like a firefly; now he flung it away impatiently and leaned back against the railing. "I suppose it sounds conceited and rather half-cocked, my talking about it so much—when I'm only going to be an ambulance driver. But I hope—I had wanted to do something else——"

"What, Gobie?"

"Why—it's only an idea of mine, and it may be quite impractical. Please don't say anything about it. Mother would simply—— It would make it much harder to go, much harder all around. Look here, Helen—if I should do it, would you mind going to Mother later on and talking with her, help make

her see that it's the thing to do? Because she might take it pretty hard——"

"For Heaven's sake, Gobie! Stop beating around the bush and *tell me!*" She leaned forward and plucked him unceremoniously by the coat. "Sit down again and calm yourself. Now—what's it all about?"

He was silent for a little, and she feared she had been too abrupt, that she had pricked the sensitive bubble of his confidence. . . . "I shouldn't have mentioned it," he said dejectedly. "But what I hope to do, when the six months are up, is get into something like the Foreign Legion. Either that or the British Army."

"Oh, *Gobie*——"

The eternal conflict between woman's attitude and man's toward war! Her exclamation voiced her hurt, her sense of wrong, her instinctive sympathy with his mother and her dismay before the splendid madness of his dream. She felt her admiration, her illusion about his heroic going forth to a service of Christian charity and sacrifice, suddenly crumble at the breath of this martial ardour, which struck her hard common sense as being mere childishness and selfish vanity. So he wasn't content to do a noble work of aid and succour as a noncombatant, when there was danger enough, Heaven knew, and loneliness enough for his mother: but he must be a soldier! He must make his mother wretched with anxiety in order to satisfy his romantic lust for adventure, for glory! In that moment's surge of indignation she was no longer an impulsive, pleasure-loving girl, but a woman wise in the perception of woman's martyrdom in war. She knew herself to be years older, generations older and more sapient than he—he who had touched her, before, with his wistful helplessness, he whose mystical vision of war as a great liberating purpose affronted her practical intelligence. Yes, and he could not care for her after all, not really care, when his all-sufficient egotism was heedless of his mother's claim!

Perhaps the latter realization disturbed and wounded her more than she cared to acknowledge. But there was more than injured *amour-propre*, more than a baffled desire to make him love her, beneath the ruins of her illusion. In that moment she saw again what she had sometimes apprehended in his presence but had hitherto ignored—that she could never love him as she wanted to love, with an entire surrender of her mind; that there would always be that secret sense of superiority of the practical over the dreamer and visionary. And in that moment the thought of making him declare himself occurred to her in a new light. A distasteful idea, when she knew she could not accept him; but for his mother's sake, ought she not to employ any means of influencing him, of dissuading him from this cruel and absurd project? If he were deaf to reason, there was the other kind of voice. . . .

And he? He listened absently, as she argued with him about returning, as she tried to convince him of his folly, of his duty to his mother. . . . It did not matter what she said, she could not understand. Women were all alike, unable to catch the vision. . . . His mother? As if he wouldn't feel the parting, the separation! As if he hadn't fought that all out weeks before, and conquered his sentimental weakness with the same stern abnegation which had sought to erase Helen from his mind. Why had he told her his secret, why had he been betrayed by her sympathy into the ridiculous fancy that she might help reconcile his mother to the Great Decision? It was time to say good-night. . . .

"Then you're quite determined not to come back next winter, Gobie?" She had moved toward him a little, and he was conscious that her hand lay outstretched close to his. "Please don't mention it to any one," he reminded her harshly. "It's only an idea of mine—and I told you in confidence."

The hand, soft to the touch and strangely disturbing, lay over his—where it remained. "If I should ask you to come back?"

He raised his face, and in the darkness peered earnestly into hers. "How—how do you mean that, Helen?"

"I want you to come back. I can't make it any plainer, can I?"

"Oh—Helen——" He suddenly seized her other hand, and wildly tried to draw her to him; but while he held her in his arms her face was averted and her body resisted him inertly. Yet her voice—composed, almost apathetic—repulsed him more than any physical attitude. "Please, Gobie. Not now—please——"

"I'm sorry," he said after a pause. He had slumped back against the cushions, hopelessly. He emitted an odd, sardonic little laugh. "I might have known you didn't mean it. Did you—did you say it because you like to have your way, or just to find out if I cared? Well—you know now."

"You're making it very hard for me," she replied quietly. She was offended at his speech; his suffering reproached her, and his lashing scorn cut the more deeply for being, she felt, deserved. But it was ungenerous of him, hateful, to catch her up when she was striving so hard to save him from himself! Did he imagine in his conceit that she was doing it for pleasure? "But you can't stop now," she told herself; and wondered why she had been unable to let him kiss her. "I did mean it, Gobie," she said. "And if you care, if you really care enough for me—— Listen, Gobie"—she seized his hand again, and held it with a friendly, cautious pressure—"don't you see how hard and impossible you make it for me? You try to kiss me—you think that shows me how much you care. That isn't the sort of thing, the sort of proof I want. Anybody can do that; you sit with a man on a swing, and it's dark, and he takes it into his head that he wants to kiss you—though I'm not accusing you of being that sort, either." She laughed; she felt elated now, and confident of the right track. "But you're unwilling to come back after you've done your duty, and spent a reasonable length of time——"

He broke in: "It's not a question of time, Helen——"

"No, it's a question of how much you care! It's a question whether you care enough for me—and your mother—to prove it by doing the sensible thing. Do you think I could marry a man who didn't care enough to come back when I asked him to—when there was no good reason why he couldn't?"

The dream was cracking, crashing, falling—like a ruined cathedral window, thousands of bits of shimmering, beautiful glass. "You mean," he stammered, "you mean you care enough—you care"—she pressed his hand warmly—"you mean you'll marry me, Helen, if I come back?"

"I——" She faltered, but only for an instant. "Yes," she murmured.

He took her hands again, but released them after a moment, folding one gently over the other. "I love you, Helen," he said steadily, in a calm, almost dispassionate voice. "I had hoped some day to ask you to marry me. But I can't promise what you ask; I can only do what I think is right. It wasn't right for me to ask you before, because I felt someone else had a stronger claim. And it doesn't seem right to me now because—I'm not free. I've tried to make you understand about the war. When I feel free to come back, I will. And then I'll ask you to marry me." He paused. "Now I must say good-night, dear—and good-bye."

Then she did a surprising thing—she caught his arm, and, leaning forward quickly, kissed him on the forehead. . . . And then sprang up, and back a pace, fending him off with her arm as he sought to hold her.

The rest was anticlimax. The farewells to her mother and father, who came down from their discreet upstairs sitting room; the good wishes; the hearty shaking of hands. Then that last moment alone with Helen, standing on the porch steps. He had not tried again to kiss her. Only as she stood there, that last time he had turned back from the walk, that last glimpse of her, caught stark and vivid out of the confused welter of

his impressions, was etched eternally on the retina of his mind . . . her figure balanced on the step's edge, as if the slightest breath would tip her poised tranquillity and send her slender grace running down the walk to call him back. The uncertain waving of her hand, half caress, half benediction. . . .

He walked home. The long stretch of Broad Street, with its plumy canopy of trees over the lonely sidewalk, its house-roofs looming dark above the lighted windows, its passing motors blazing their brilliant path through the night; they were but ephemeral shadows on his quiet ecstasy. Now and then he looked up at the stars; and once, just before he reached his house, saw a plunging ribbon of light across the skies. There came to his mind an old forgotten myth of his childhood, about a falling star signalling—which was it? he'd forgotten—a child born somewhere, or a death. And strangely exalted, dreaming mad dreams of love and war, he walked on.

III

Stuart's train pulled into the Grand Central Terminal at ten o'clock, on time to the minute, on the morning of the day the *Rochambeau* was to sail. Gobie was not at the gate as the stream of arriving passengers, with Stuart well in their van, began to debouch upon the concourse. After waiting a few moments, the latter dispatched his porter to the Biltmore Hotel, where Gobie had expressed his ambitious intention of staying, and followed leisurely toward the marble staircase. And then he descried a distraught Gobie, running down the steps three at a time, looking dishevelled, unwashed, and very much as if taking part in a fireman's drill.

"Overslept!" communicated Gobie with a gasp. "They called me at nine-fifteen, and I just dozed off. Well!" Recovering his breath, he yawned hugely. "Had breakfast?"

"Oh, hours ago." He commented mordantly on the other's appearance and drew from it sundry deductions, all highly disparaging, as to Gobie's manner of passing his last evening on

American soil. "*Honi soit,*" retorted Gobie, between yawns; "theatre and the Pré-Cat.—I got to bed before one. And I'm all set—look here!"—proudly displaying, from his inner coat-pocket, items comprising a roll of papers, a steamship ticket, a bulging pocketbook, and—it fell out on the marble floor, face down, and was instantly retrieved by its owner—a small kodak picture.

No sign of Stuart noticing any embarrassment or its cause! "Come on, Wilkinson," he urged. "Let's hurry and get our strayed reveller something to eat. We'd better go to his room first so he can renew his acquaintance with a washbowl—and get that god-awful tie tied right! Come on, I'll blow you to a breakfast in your apartment."

He telephoned the breakfast order while the lessee of Room 1409 vanished in a sound of running water and much loud whistling, and, the order given, sauntered over to the bathroom door. "Tell me about Columbus," he said, with an air of critical detachment.

"Not much to tell." Blowings and sputterings. He was of the opinion that Columbus had changed very little, though of course his brother had gotten a raise and was working hard. "Mother's fine—cheered up like anything . . ." For the rest, it was difficult to talk from behind a towel. His ablutions required considerable time; apparently New York was a nightmare of soot; he could not get really cleansed and purified until the waiter arrived with his breakfast. Issuing forth from the bathroom in a highly rubbed and polished condition, he attacked his strawberries voraciously and revealed an astonishing interest in what Stuart had done since Commencement. He became an admirable listener, drawing out the other's story as dexterously as a skilful dentist extracting a troublesome tooth—with this difference, that Stuart needed neither gas nor persuasion. Indeed, Stuart displayed the typical loquacity of a novice in debauch relieving a burdened conscience before a chosen friend—a confidant in whose discretion, and, above all, appre-

ciation, he may implicitly rely. Gobie made the novice feel this doubly, but Stuart would probably have talked in any case.

Both laughed a good deal, Gobie's sense of humour proving an agreeable stimulant to the narrator's and removing the last vestige of Stuart's shame. The two days' carnival began to appear in its proper light, as a ridiculous essay in imbecility, its original cause and reprehensibility obscured by its unquestioned merits as an escapade. Perhaps Stuart told the story too amusingly; both forgot or ignored the possible part of Stuart's mother in furnishing a first impulse.

It was nearly eleven when Gobie suddenly remembered that the *Rochambeau* would sail at three o'clock, and that he hadn't attended to his baggage, and that he must see Dick Farabee, and that he should have reported at the Ambulance Headquarters at ten-thirty. Stuart volunteered for the baggage, explaining that he had to go out anyway, and appearing mildly interested in the conjecture as to how the other would ever have made a boat alone.

When Gobie returned to the room an hour later he found his former room-mate sitting in an armchair by the window, the inevitable papers on his lap, while his attention seemed entirely absorbed in the minute examination of a small unwrapped parcel. "Hello," Stuart greeted, not getting up. "Everything taken care of?"

Gobie nodded assent, inquiring in turn about the baggage and receiving a reassuring reply. "What's the package you're so interested in, Stu?" he asked.

"A wrist watch." The tone was entirely matter-of-fact, but Gobie's suspicions of facetiousness were not easily allayed. "I don't think I caught that word," he retorted. "Did you say '*wrist watch*'?"

In 1915 the article in question had not yet come into its own among the more virile half of the American population.

Stuart smiled a conciliatory smile. "Dick's got one, you know . . . and they say they're practical as the devil, that

every one wears them over there. I didn't know what to get you, but thought"—he coughed, and avoiding the other's eyes, rose and handed over the small square case. "I noticed you didn't have one this morning," he added hastily.

"Oh!—Stu, you mean—— Hell, fellow, you shouldn't have bothered doing that." He held the parcel awkwardly in one hand, staring at it with incredulous gaze; it would have been difficult to say whether recipient or donor was the more embarrassed. "Thanks a lot, but you shouldn't have——" He recovered himself sufficiently to take up the watch and strap it on his wrist. "Say, it's a beauty, Stu," he adjudged, admiring the effect from various angles, with the eye of a veteran connoisseur of wrist watches. "And you bloated old plutocrat, getting it at Tiffany's!"

"I would have sent it to the boat," Stuart apologized, "but it didn't seem wise, exactly, and I wanted to explain—I mean about everybody wearing them. . . . I sent you some books and truck, but it didn't strike me they'd do you much good after you get there, so—— Now, here's something else that you're going to think is queer." He had crossed the room, and brought forth another, and larger, package from the dresser drawer. He moved nervously, as if finding relief in the mere fact of movement; apparently the ordeal had not yet reached its culmination. "Now, don't open it just yet. I'll bet you five dollars you can't guess what it is."

Gobie fingered the heavy rectangular box with gingerly apprehension. "Not a first aid kit—or a supply of spare parts for my Ford." He chuckled, suddenly aware of the comic aspects of their situation. "Don't keep me in suspense, Stu—what is it I'm going to think is queer?"

"Open it." He sauntered carelessly to the window, his back turned on the agonizing spectacle of Gobie tearing open the box.

It was a silver flask.

"Now, don't think I'm trying to make a tippler out of you,"

said the voice from the window. His powers of self-restraint had been too sorely taxed; like Lot's wife he had succumbed to fatal curiosity. "I know you promised your mother not to drink, but this is different. She wouldn't object, I know, to your carrying that; you'll need a good stiff pull, now and then, when it's cold and you've had a long siege of it. You know the British give out rum in the trenches—— What's so funny? Oh, go on and laugh; I know it's queer——"

"I'm not laughing at the flask," explained the other, and immediately laughed again. "I'm laughing at you, at your—at your worrying about me and the demon rum." He grew sober, his face assumed a quizzical expression of mingled embarrassment and amusement. "I—you don't need to worry, Stu, I'll use it, all right . . . and I don't think it will—invalidate my promise to Mother. I"— he advanced impulsively, then stopped and sat down on the bed—"I don't know what to say, how to thank you," he ended, in a queer voice.

Stuart, presenting an unemotional back to the bed, was looking out of the window. "Hell, forget it," he said thickly.

There was an interval of silence. Gobie lighted a cigarette; Stuart, hearing the match, mechanically felt in his pocket. "Here, have one of mine," Gobie proffered quickly, rising and coming forward with a package. They did not look at each other as Stuart drew out the cigarette and accepted the match Gobie had struck. "Thanks," Stuart murmured, and exhaling a great cloud of smoke, sank into the armchair. "Suppose we ought to find the others and get some lunch," he suggested.

Gobie consulted his watch. "Lots of time yet. You're not hungry already, are you?"

"Not I."

"Say, Stu"—Gobie had risen, and stood leaning against the dresser—"I didn't tell you this morning, I guess. I saw Helen when I was home."

"So?" His voice was apathetic; he regarded the tip of his

cigarette. "How was she?" he asked in measured tones.

"Just the same as ever. She asked about you."

After a pause: "That was nice of her."

They relapsed into silence.

"Stu, I want to ask you something," Gobie began, after a moment. "It's a hard question—I don't know whether I ought to ask it. But you've been so damned square to me, so——" He struggled hard, as if forcing his inarticulate feeling into the narrow mould of words. "You make me feel like a dog, coming down to see me off and—giving me these things. I want to tell you—I'll never forget it."

"Hell, it wasn't anything," Stuart muttered.

Gobie blew his nose. "What I wanted to ask was, do you—do you still care about her?"

A pause. "No," said Stuart suddenly, and met the other's eyes in a swift, unflinching glance.

"Tell me the truth, Stu," Gobie said at length.

"I tell you, no! That's plain enough, isn't it?" He laughed oddly, without mirth. "I told you in the spring, Gobe, that it was absolutely all off between Helen and me. Do you think things have changed since then?"

"I know, but——"

"As a matter of fact, things have changed since then—in a different way. I've got another girl now, Gobe. Haven't said anything about it because—well, it's something new, and matters haven't gone very far as yet—though I have hopes——"

Gobie, his eyes wide with amazement, began to believe; his belief was written large upon his radiant face.

"And now," pursued the other, with a strange quiet smile, "would you mind letting me congratulate you?"

"We aren't really engaged." Gobie had flushed; his transparent countenance, if it did not actually belie the words, revealed at least that he, too, "had hopes." He stammered: "We merely talked—about things—in a way——"

"You have an understanding, is what you mean." His

voice was hearty, with an accent of finality, almost of relief. He got up and gave Gobie a playful push, catching him at the same time with his left hand; caught Gobie's hand, and wrung it till the other winced. "Gobie, old boy, it's the very best thing that could have happened! The best for Helen, the best for you. And I'm glad you told me; I'd never have forgiven you if you hadn't, because I want to be the first to—to congratulate you."

"Thanks, Stu. You're—you're a peach to say that. I can only hope that some day I'll be able to return it—you know what I mean—the first to congratulate you. But you mustn't congratulate me yet; just wish me good luck."

"All the luck in the world," said Stuart solemnly, shaking hands again. "And now toss that flask in your suitcase and strap it up. It's high time we were getting something to eat."

PART IV

You were advised his flesh was capable
Of wounds and scars, and that his forward spirit
Would lift him where most trade of danger ranged.

King Henry IV: Part II.

CHAPTER XII

"PEACE AND PLENTY"

IN THE spring of 1916 the Columbus firm of Bonant & Co., Bonds and Investment Securities, was enjoying its greatest prosperity since its original incorporation twenty-five years before. Although in looking back from the post-war period that spring is rather overshadowed in the minds of the company's officers by the later zenith, it nevertheless stands out as very pleasantly memorable. It is also recalled, by some, as the time succeeding the election of two new vice-presidents at the annual January meeting, and one of the greatest single triumphs of old Roger Bonant's long career, the securing of young Stuart Evans as an additional bulwark to the prestige and soundness of the company. To be sure the way to this triumph had been paved in the fall of 1915, when the young man was added to the sales force; but the capstone was not laid until somewhat later, with his elevation to the third vice-presidency following upon a substantial investment in the company's stock. Roger Bonant had congratulated himself, at that time, on an excellent piece of business; and with good reason, in view of the young man's recognized ability to step into any one of a half-dozen desirable "family" jobs without making any investment at all.

Stuart had made the decision partly because of his mother's desire that he get experience in an investment business, partly because the prospect of stepping into a "family" job repelled his independence. He had returned to Columbus in the fall of 1915, after a lazy and pleasant four months spent at the San Francisco Fair, on the Pacific Coast, and in Honolulu. The first part of the summer he had enjoyed as a member of a rather

rollicking party of young men, ex-classmates, who had commandeered a private car belonging to the railroad magnate, father of one of the party. In August his mother had come out, and together they had visited Hawaii in September and returned *via* the Northwest. The long vacation, toward its end, had begun to pall on him, and when he finally set foot in his native town in November, for the first time in over a year, his elation at being home was accompanied by a feverish restlessness and urge to get down to some form of permanent work.

Among the family interests the only one that held any attraction for him was the Buckeye Forgings Co., the drop-forgings plant his father had organized ten years before. After an initial period of success, to which the automobile industry had largely contributed, the Buckeye had travelled a thorny road. The panic of 1907, following upon the sensational death of its president the fall before, had lost it a large share of business which had never wholly returned; auto manufacturers had grown increasingly independent of such small auxiliary industries. Later it had engaged in the fabrication of tools, but the competition of larger plants in the Lake Erie and Pittsburgh districts had kept its earnings to an unsatisfactory minimum; and while solvent and, since the war prosperity, able to pay irregular dividends, it appeared to have no rosy future. But for the insistence of Arthur Evans, who was a minority stockholder by virtue of his brother's will and one of its three directors, Stuart would never have seriously considered going into the Buckeye. It was Arthur's eloquent championing of "family tradition," his confident conviction that Stuart would take to manufacturing like the proverbial duck to water and in time restore the Buckeye to its former prosperity, that had induced the boy to spend two weeks about the plant soon after his return.

The two weeks, however, had proved discouraging. Confronted with the intricacies of electric forges and brobdingnagian steam drop-hammers, Stuart felt his ignorance and incompe-

tence. Manufacturing, he thought, was no longer an affair for young gentlemen who had scorned a technical education and barely passed their chemistry courses. As for the argument that he should devote his young manhood to the declining Buckeye simply because his father had organized it, Stuart was in no mood for purely sentimental undertakings. The less said about his father the better, he thought; and although the project might have appealed strongly with success actually assured, he had no desire to revive his father's name through a possible failure.

Then there was the street-railway company, but that, too, had seen its best days; street-railway transportation everywhere faced a dubious future. There remained the hotel, which was very flourishing but quite out of the question, and the last alternative of going into some financial house in New York. But Stuart had been too homesick for the little city of his boyhood to consider living elsewhere. Life in a smaller place, he believed, under such favourable conditions and auspices as his, offered in the long run the fullest measure of contentment, the best friendships, the most abiding pleasures. He and his family belonged to Columbus, a goodly part of Columbus did or would belong to him. To be sure he might occasionally run into Helen Thurlow, but he could face her now, he thought, without heartache—yes, and without regret, since what had happened in the past was so plainly for the best. For the best that she and Gobie were engaged, that she had seen the impossibility of understanding Stuart's mother or of being understood by her. It was over a year since their brief engagement had been broken, and he had survived the blow, had even contrived to enjoy life after a fashion. Indeed, he had threatened, during the previous summer, to make good his ridiculous assurance to Gobie the day the latter had sailed—though the arrival of his mother in California had blighted the hopes of his fair divorcée and abruptly ended an affair which was just beginning to prove exciting and might have proved dangerous. But in any event, he told himself, he

was inoculated against any relapse into the old madness—and there were attractive younger girls coming along. . . .

That day when Phil Bonant had taken him to his father's office, the prospect of working and living in Columbus, of being with his mother and near his uncle, had seemed to him the plain highway to happiness and the perfect solution of his problem. And when his mother had enthusiastically subscribed to the idea of his learning the investment business, his last lingering compunctions over the "family tradition" received their death blow. Within three days he went to work as a bond salesman, and because he had inherited, besides a measure of his father's ability, a Teutonic capacity for devotion to prosaic duty, was happier during the ensuing months than he had been during the preceding twelve.

It was a busy, and in America an opulent, spring. Trade and industry were thriving fabulously; the mass of people seemed, on the surface, to have become increasingly indifferent toward the war and its issues. At no time since its beginning had public opinion appeared so flaccid; it was as if the fever of the *Lusitania*, followed by inaction and coma, had sapped the nation's capacity for interest or passion. The greatest battle since the Marne was being waged at Verdun; U-boat outrages continued on the high seas, but while American industries responded to the Allied call for munitions the masses turned from the war communiqués to the sport pages, and the pacifists spoke to crowded churches and auditoriums. The national will appeared paralyzed, chaotically dissipated among a thousand discordant impulses; the national morale at its lowest ebb. It was the year when vaudeville halls and hurdy-gurdys were lyrical with that masterpiece of American bathos, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier."

To a degree Stuart's attitude mirrored the general heedlessness. He had had his hour of passionate doubt and decision; he had vanquished his envy of Gobie's and the others' participation in the struggle. He was sick of the war, sick of its

nightmare horrors and the agonizing conflict of sympathies it had brought him. As long as his friends remained in the Ambulance Service he could continue to read the papers with only a passing interest. Then came the savage outbreak of Verdun in February, and not long after, his first letter from Gobie in several months. Gobie had enlisted, with Farabee, in the Lafayette Escadrille of the Foreign Legion. That was exciting. That brought home to him the battle of Verdun. Gobie in the French Army, Gobie wearing a French uniform, flying a French aëroplane over the German lines. . . .

Though at first he was hardly aware of it, Verdun, with its personal significance enhanced by Gobie's enlistment, marked a definite change in Stuart's attitude toward the war.

One night in March, just after receiving Gobie's letter, he stopped at the Wilkinsons' to see Enid. Though the relations between his friend's mother and Augusta were still strained, he had seen the former at frequent intervals since his home-coming, and they had made a practise of communicating to each other their latest reports from Gobie. She had known of her son's enlistment first, and had telephoned him at his office. He found her alone, her older son, who had meanwhile become engaged, spending the evening elsewhere; and she appeared tired, a little haggard from anxiety, and very glad to talk with him.

"I've been wanting all day to talk to someone," she told him, "and I hoped you'd stop, because somehow you always make me feel better."

He noticed the quick, nervous movements of her thin hands, and how, as she became more at ease, and as he assured her confidently that Gobie could not possibly be in any danger, they relaxed gradually and were crossed peacefully in her lap. She was very childlike to-night, he thought, strangely helpless and wistful and pathetic. Her trusting faith in his assurances touched him; that posture of her hands touched him. He talked the more dogmatically, being in truth persuaded that her fears for her son were groundless for the time being. "You

see he can't fly for months yet," he told her, and referred to Gobie's own mention of an indefinite training period at the rear; it was even improbable that the fledgling aviator would be allowed off the ground for a long time. And meanwhile the war could not last much longer—the British would be making a big drive soon, long before the Germans were able to accomplish anything at Verdun. . . .

"Ah!" she broke in quickly. "But I thought you—do you really think so, Stuart?"

"Of course! Why, just think of England—the British must have an enormous army by this time. And then there's Russia. Russia will be doing something soon. You know there're lots of authorities who say the war will be over this summer." It was hard for him to say it, when he believed quite differently; but he went on, citing this and that article he had read, this and that prophecy of German exhaustion and collapse, trying his best to divert her mind from her son's future to more general considerations. She seemed slowly to brighten; she seemed to regard his pronouncements as oracular, and he almost thought he had convinced her. But at the end, after he had talked for a long time, she said with a sigh that extinguished the gleam of hope on her face:

"Yes, but that's what people were saying a year ago, Stuart. I wish—oh, I wish I could believe!"

And later: "I believe in God, Stuart. And it helps me when I think that every night there are millions and millions of women, and men, praying to God that this terrible war may end, praying with me. . . ."

As he was trying to engage her interest in himself, telling her of his progress and his day's activities, Helen Thurlow came in. She was on her way to a concert in company with Paul Ransom and another couple; she had left the others in their car, it appeared, just to run in and say good-night to "Auntie" Enid. The form of address was not lost on Stuart; he thought it a silly affectation and wished she had had the courage to say

"Mother." She was very pretty in her rose-coloured evening frock, and her blue eyes were bright and dancing. "Hello, Stu," she greeted him with a cordial smile, after kissing Enid. "How's the bloated old bond salesman? Been talking over the good news?"

There was a slight pause. "Yes," he answered, "I've been telling her that it is good news, and that she mustn't worry."

"Worry? Why, Auntie dear, you mustn't worry for a moment—there's nothing to worry over as long as he isn't at the front! We must just be proud! Oh, it *is* splendid, and we are all so proud of him—everyone is. But you"—she patted Enid's hand—"you must be the proudest of all! Now I must run on—I'm already late." She kissed Enid again, and Stuart noticed, as she turned toward the door, that her lip was trembling. That somehow obliterated the disagreeable first impression her entrance had made on him; and her coming seemed to have restored Enid miraculously. "No, I won't let you bother to come out with me," she told him; and was gone.

Not long afterward he left also, after promising to come for dinner within a few days. Outside, in the cold wind of a blustering March night, he resolved to write Gobie the next day and beg him to get out of Aviation—if not that, for God's sake to write his mother that he was permanently stationed in the rear. He might try to cable . . . It was a good thing, he reflected, that Helen and Gobie were engaged: Helen was a great comfort to Enid. He must see Helen about writing Gobie and joining her persuasions to his own. . . . Then, obeying a sudden impulse, he turned the car around, drove downtown, and bought the latest edition of the evening paper. Reports of German gains around Fort Douaumont. . . . He cursed the war, and, for the first time, the German Army.

CHAPTER XIII

HORNET'S NEST; FIRST PHASE

IT WAS in May that the despised and lowly Buckeye Forgings Co. came, for an interval, to the centre of Stuart's stage.

The month before, the illness of old Samuel Kline, a retired manufacturer who had been a friend of Stuart's grandfather Moldenhauer and one of the executors of his estate, had caused his retirement from the Buckeye's Board of Directors. The company, a "close" corporation with only twenty-odd stockholders, had long been controlled by the estates of Maynard Evans and Frederick Moldenhauer, each of whom had retained a third of its original common stock at the time of its organization. Upon Stuart's majority his father's estate had been divided, Stuart receiving the larger part of its Buckeye stock, while his mother and Arthur Evans each became minority holders. (By the terms of the will Mrs. Andrews had been given $100,000, which had in turn gone to her only heir, her child.) Subsequently Arthur Evans had been made one of the three directors, the others being Samuel Kline and Henry Weatherby, chairman of the Board; but the actual control devolved eventually upon Augusta Evans, who had succeeded in getting herself named an executrix of her father's estate and besides exercising a known influence with her son had Samuel Kline as her willing mouthpiece. With Kline and Arthur Evans as directors she could be mistress of any situation, and at stockholders' meetings she was equally supreme, voting her son's stock, her own, and that of the Moldenhauer estate as a single preponderant unit; a supremacy amply proved by her electing,

two years before, George Kittredge as president against the claims of a rival candidate urged by Henry Weatherby and Arthur Evans. As she had no desire to relinquish her power upon Peter Kline's withdrawal, she had succeeded, with Arthur's support, in electing Stuart as a director to fill the vacancy.

Both Stuart and his uncle had rejoiced at this opportunity of giving the young man a hand in the direction of the company, Arthur hoping that it would result in awakening his nephew's interest in the enterprise so long associated with the family name; Stuart wishing to amend his former defection by eventually rendering the Buckeye a measure of service. He went to work diligently to acquire at least a superficial knowledge of the business, studying technical handbooks and trade journals during many of his evenings and spending what time he could spare from the bond business at the plant. When his mother left in May for several weeks' shopping and theatre-going in New York, her suggestion that he accompany her met with prompt refusal; it would never do for the third vice-president of Bonant & Co. and one of the directors of the Buckeye to play the truant at a time when the bond business was at flood-tide and his course of home instruction in the problems of a lagging manufacturing plant scarcely begun! He felt that he had made a good impression on the officers and older employees of Bonant & Co. by his display of what was to them unexpected zeal and industry in one of the idle rich, and he didn't intend to spoil it. And his mother, to do her credit, had taken his refusal with approving grace; for of course, if he worked hard now he would be able to take a little more time for their summer at Hyannis.

So it happened that he and Arthur Evans were left to represent the family interests on that May day when Weatherby called an informal meeting of the Board for three o'clock in his office in the First National Bank Building. The chairman, telephoning Stuart that morning, had inquired when Mrs. Evans was expected to return from New York; on learning that such an event lacked imminency he was non-committal.

At five minutes to three Stuart was ushered into Mr. Weatherby's outer office, which served as waiting room, and was informed by the secretary that the latter's chief would presently be free to see him and the other gentlemen. A moment later Arthur Evans entered, to find his nephew idly glancing through the afternoon paper.

"How's the boy vice-president?" he greeted smilingly.

In reply that personage expressed his interest in the stock market, which had had a very strong opening and shown a sensational advance in steels and industrials.

"What's on the front page?" Arthur asked.

"Nothing very startling; same old war. French have won back some ground at Verdun."

"Ah!" The other stirred quickly, and rose to take the paper as Stuart handed it to him. "I'll just glance through it, if you don't mind. Weatherby's a little slow."

"Do you know what the meeting's about?" Stuart queried.

"I have an idea. However!" His face brightened. "You won't have long to wait." He returned to his paper. "Hmm . . . le Mort Homme and Hill 304—ah, good! . . . Very good," he repeated softly, to himself. "Well . . . that means a move for my little flags."

He folded the paper and laid it on the table. "Heard anything from Gobie lately?"

"No. Mrs. Wilkinson got a letter last week, but it had been censored until there wasn't much left. He's still in training."

Mr. Kittredge, the president of the Buckeye, arrived at that moment in considerable anxiety over being five minutes late—an anxiety explicable by his desire to retain the goodwill of the Evans family and to conciliate Weatherby, whose faith in him had never approached fanaticism. He was a big, overstout, bald-headed man of about fifty, with a great paunch, an iron-gray moustache close-clipped, and what Stuart always thought of as the typical manufacturer's face—that type of fleshy dollars-and-cents face which cartoonists love to depict beneath

a silk hat, adorn with a large cigar, and label "Wall St." or "Coal Trust." His character belied his face; he was kind-hearted and lacking in aggressiveness, and for this reason there were many who thought the Buckeye would never flourish under his management. Simultaneously with his apologies the secretary threw open the door of Weatherby's large private office, and the directors, followed by Kittredge, filed in and took chairs about a large mahogany centre table.

Weatherby convened the meeting by briefly remarking that they would dispense with the reading of the minutes and all other preliminaries and get down to business at once—and was it agreeable to Mr. Stuart Evans that his uncle should act as secretary *pro tem.* for anything which they might wish to make a matter of record? He remained seated in his desk chair, facing the others and with the light at his back. A Yankee banker and manufacturer of the old school, he was tall, gaunt, forbidding, and close-mouthed; his face, like his clothes, seemed neutral-tinted and designed to merge with the background for the purpose of effacing their owner's personality and enabling him to absorb impressions with entire detachment and imperturbability. A stone image would have been more capable of warmth.

He began very promptly: "I have called you, gentlemen, concerning a matter of vital importance to the company, which it is the business of this Board to act on without delay. The president is here for the purpose of giving you all the facts. Mr. Kittredge."

Smiling an expansive smile, Kittredge coughed with an air of weighty but very pleasant importance, and said: "A certain matter has come up which, in view of—hem—the attitude of certain of the company's larger stockholders——"

"Come to the point, George," growled Weatherby.

"The matter in question," resumed Kittredge, somewhat nettled, "is a very large and advantageous contract which a big Bridgeport firm is anxious to place with us. This firm has

recently made a contract with the British Government"—he paused impressively—"calling for the manufacture of five thousand—hem—*five thousand* 18-pounder field guns for the British Army, with limbers and caissons, to be delivered within six months. The Bridgeport people are contracting with various firms for parts of the gun they themselves can't turn out. We can swing the contract for the recoil-sleeves and parts of the gun-carriage—practically for as large a part of the entire order as we can handle. I won't go into technicalities, but the manufacture of these parts is very exacting work and a long-time job. I have gone into the thing very thoroughly, and we can do it and deliver the goods—by turning over the entire capacity of the plant for the next six months."

He had addressed Stuart throughout, and all three men were anxiously watching the young man's face, whose look of puzzled inquiry had deepened to a frown. But Kittredge gave him no chance to speak; he leaned forward, emphasizing his words with occasional gestures of his large fist:

"Now, here's the situation. This thing means a life chance for the plant. You and your mother know what the last report showed. There's no need for me to recall that we haven't paid a dividend on the common in a coon's age. But—here's the point—these other fellows that are making the money are tied up with regular orders, and *we aren't!* See? This contract's a whale, and believe me, it's just the beginning! We can jump into this munition work and just roll and wallow in it for the next year—for God knows how long—as long as the war lasts, and you don't see any signs of its ending, do you? And profits! Well, say! We can practically write our own ticket! They want it bad, and they'll pay for it. The British Government, mind you. And look what some of these iron and steel fellows are doing—Midwest Wire, f'rinstance, just to name one of a dozen. I don't need to tell *you*—you know what their stocks have done. And we can do the same thing as easy as falling off a log!"

"Regular customers, George," prompted Weatherby, who was watching like a hawk.

"Yes. I was coming to that. Our regular customers—hem—there isn't a one that we're really tied up with. What I mean is, our books are pretty clear, and there isn't an order that we're really obligated on. Most of it's short-time stuff, anyway. If any of the others want to cry, we'll let 'em! We'll be in a damn sight stronger position to get 'em back and hold 'em after we've cleaned up on war munitions. So much for that." He paused, drawing in his breath sharply and glancing at Weatherby. "The management believes this contract should be accepted, provided——"

Weatherby cut in: "No *provided* about it. There's no question that the contract should be accepted, is there, Kittredge?"

"From the standpoint of the plant, no. However, in view of certain—hem—considerations, I felt it my duty to lay the matter before the directors before proceeding further."

"I think that covers the essential facts," Weatherby said crisply. "Thank you, Mr. Kittredge. Now, gentlemen"—he turned to Stuart and his uncle—"it's for us to decide. We don't want to antagonize anybody, but we must consider the best interests of the stockholders *as a whole*. Are there any questions before we vote?"

"Do you mean, Mr. Weatherby," Stuart asked slowly, "that you and my uncle and I have the final say in this matter?"

"Not only in this matter but in all others which affect the welfare of the Buckeye."

"But we're responsible to the stockholders, Mr. Weatherby!"

"You must understand, Mr. Evans," the chairman answered coldly, "that the stockholders have nothing whatever to say about the management of this company—or any other—after electing the directors. We have full power to decide. If the stockholders don't approve our decisions they can elect other directors to carry out their wishes. I wish to impress upon you

the fact that in the present question we are to consider what is best for the company and decide entirely on the merits of the case."

Stuart was somewhat incensed. "I must say, Mr. Weatherby —and Mr. Kittredge," he began, "that if you wish to consider the wishes of the principal stockholders you won't turn the Buckeye into a munitions factory for the British Army. Doubtless, from a financial point of view, it seems the sensible thing to do. But I can speak for my mother in assuring you that the proposal would be quite distasteful to her, as it is to me."

Weatherby replied, after a long pause: "Your mother, Mr. Evans, is a business woman. I am aware, of course, how she feels about this war. But if we don't make the guns somebody else will. When did you say she'd get back?"

"Not before the end of next week," Stuart answered. "However, there's really no use in your trying to persuade her, Mr. Weatherby. She feels very strongly on the whole question." He checked himself; it was scarcely wise to add that his mother, only a month before, had donated liberally to a German-American "defense" fund for the purpose of preventing the American traffic in munitions and foodstuffs for the Allies. How strangely obtuse of the experienced "practical" man before him if he thought he could win over a woman who would gladly disburse twice as much as the Buckeye could ever pay her from munitions profits, in order to secure a Congressional embargo on the shipment of munitions! "Of course, I can telegraph her if you wish," he said stiffly. "But believe me, it would be like waving a red flag in her face."

Mr. Weatherby neatly spat into a large brass cuspidor. "As I've already pointed out, the question is for us to decide." He glanced at Stuart's uncle. "Do you wish to express an opinion, Arthur, before we vote?"

Everyone looked at Arthur.

"I think," he commenced slowly, "if I understand the situation, it's a question of practical expediency versus consider-

ations which, as I hope to show you, Stuart, are in this case largely sentimental. Granted that the proposal of making war munitions for the English Government is distasteful in the abstract. Granted that none of us desires to make money out of the war, or profit by doing something which our own Government disapproves of. Our Government, being too proud to fight"—his voice changed from suavity to sudden bitterness—"does not object to private business transactions between its citizens and foreign governments. We are at perfect liberty to use our plant for anything we want to make, and to sell it to the British, or the Germans, or the French, or the Austrians. It happens that the Allies can use our plant and the Germans can't. It also happens that there are numerous forgings plants in this country, and as Mr. Weatherby says, if the Buckeye doesn't choose to furnish the stuff to the British *somebody else can and will.* Now, look here, Stuart—I'm going to speak plainly. We aren't considering private sympathies at all in this thing. Get that. We're considering the good of the Buckeye and the job of getting it on its feet. If the Germans could ship supplies, and if they came to us with the same contract, it would amount to the same thing. In that case Mrs. Evans would be willing enough to see the Buckeye make guns. Now then, suppose we turn this contract down and go on in our old rut. We wouldn't be helping the Germans one iota, and we wouldn't be hurting the British one iota. But we would hurt ourselves a hell of a lot!"

Kittredge said gruffly: "You're damn right." Weatherby nodded approval with his face in shadow.

"The officers and directors of a corporation," Arthur went on, before his nephew could speak, "have a clearly defined duty toward their stockholders. They hold a trust, and it is their sacred duty to discharge that trust by paying the stockholders an adequate return on their investment. That's clear enough, isn't it? But what we sometimes forget is that every stockholder owes something to every other stockholder. Let me

illustrate what I mean. Bill Smith, let us say, thought the Buckeye was a mighty good thing when it started, and he took all his available money—his life savings of a couple thousand dollars—and put it in stock. After a while the stock goes down, the company stops paying Bill the dividends he needs, and he finds he can't sell without a ruinous loss. Now this contract is Bill's chance, and the chance of every other stockholder who isn't so rich already but what he needs the interest on his investment. Don't you owe them something? Just because *you* don't need the money, have you any right to keep it from the poor devils that do? Your decision can't have any possible bearing on the war, can't shorten it or prolong it or affect its final outcome in the slightest way. It can't hurt your mother any; it can only affect these other stockholders who trusted your father ten years ago."

It almost carried the day. But Kittredge, after a slight pause, spoiled it all by saying blandly: "I felt sure that the other stockholders——"

"This is a directors' meeting," Weatherby interrupted. "Suppose we take a vote—does the Buckeye accept the contract or not?"

But it was too late; Stuart had had time to reflect. "I vote against accepting," he said. "However, I heartily agree with what my uncle said about the minor stockholders. The only thing is, there are only a few of them, and there isn't a one that's absolutely dependent on the Buckeye for a livelihood. But it seems to me the fairest thing to do would be to submit the question to a stockholders' meeting. If this contract carries before the stockholders, all right, but my mother and I——"

The meeting was becoming warm; Weatherby again broke in: "I say it's for us to decide. How do you vote, Arthur?"

Arthur's face was a puzzle. Stuart, studying it closely, thought that his suggestion had been more of a master stroke than he had at first realized: it had succeeded in placing his uncle in a quandary. Since Arthur and Weatherby together

could decide the question against the young man, he had taken the only possible means of forestalling them; for Arthur, he knew, hesitated before a course which could not fail to antagonize his sister-in-law, and perhaps his nephew as well. Did Arthur prize his war sympathies and the prosperity of the Buckeye more than that goodwill of his relatives he had tried so long to regain? Stuart, as he asked himself that question, doubted any negative answer; and he was taken completely by surprise when his uncle at length returned:

"Suppose we refer it to a stockholders' meeting."

Stuart threw a look of gratitude at the man who had so amazingly deserted the enemy's camp and come over to his own.

"I think that's the wisest course," communicated Kittredge.

And old Henry Weatherby, that cold potato who had never been known to lose his temper except when it served him well to lose it, actually glared at every man in the room!

"Well," he growled finally, "if you want to run the Buckeye as a family picnic I can't stop you." He angrily chewed the end of a stogie, gradually regaining his calm. "Go ahead and have your stockholders' meeting; we'll have it damn quick, too. But I'll tell you this much: you're going to stick your heads into a hornet's nest. People don't keep their blood cool when it comes to this war, let me tell you. . . . Arthur, draw up a resolution and let's get this over with."

Stuart walked out of the office a few minutes later feeling the heady intoxication of a youngster convinced that he had outwitted the wily machinations of a very old head. He respected Weatherby; he intended to bestow the generous and affectionate gratitude of a victor upon his uncle, who had made the victory possible. But Arthur lagged behind. "Sit down, Arthur, I want to talk to you about another matter," was the last thing the young man heard Weatherby say.

CHAPTER XIV

"ILS NE PASSERONT PAS!"

I

YOU'RE going to stick your heads into a hornet's nest"——The words lingered in Stuart's mind as a subject for very earnest and continued reflection; and the more he reflected the more ominous the approaching encounter with the hornet stockholders appeared. To be sure he had prevented a decisive approval of the munitions contract by seizing the only possible alternative; his mother, he felt sure, would applaud his action: but wasn't it a case of leaping from the frying pan into the fire? The return of his mother, very much on the warpath and with her natural wrath at having to abbreviate her trip considerably augmented by Weatherby's brazen attempt, as it seemed to her, to set the wishes of the principal stockholders at naught—her return very clearly emphasized what seemed to Stuart a nasty and inevitable situation. As long as he voted with her at the stockholders' meeting they could defeat the munitions project easily; but how disagreeable to have the issue brought into the open! There would be, of course, a good many mutterings of "pro-German" and much bitterness on both sides. And what was far more serious, the meeting would result in definitely committing his mother, and him, to the German cause.

He realized, as he pondered the matter, that such a public commitment was the last thing he desired at this time. Face to face with the question of the Buckeye making British guns, his mother he knew would mince no words. Neither would the resentful and defeated group of minority stockholders, after it

was over. The story would be public property within a week. The fact that Augusta had long since been recognized as a German sympathizer and that her action would cause no great surprise, did not lessen the certainty of general disapproval and odium. People had begun to keep in abeyance their first violent prejudice against pro-Germans; and to start the old sores bleeding afresh, at a time when the war seemed happily in the background, was infinitely deplorable. Confound it, his mother was just beginning to be her old confident and likable self again, her friends were just beginning to welcome her back on the old basis—and why did this damnable thing have to rear its ugly head anew?

That there was even more at stake, his uncle impressed upon him the afternoon of Augusta's arrival from New York. Arthur spent over an hour in his nephew's office, employing every argument, resorting to every eloquent device, in a resolute effort to persuade the young man to reconsider. Arthur had voted for the stockholders' meeting, he said, because as a minority stockholder he didn't desire to thwart the expressed wishes of Stuart and his mother, who, when all was said and done, owned the controlling interest in the company and were entitled to a just consideration on the part of the directors. He wanted the Buckeye to accept the contract, he felt most strongly that they all owed it to the Buckeye to vote for the contract, but he preferred that if munitions were to be made, it should be with the full consent of the Evans family. And the result was that they were all in for a nasty mess. Stuart saw that, didn't he? Did he wish to be branded with the stigma of pro-Germanism in this month of May, 1916? Did he wish to have it said that he loved the Kaiser well enough to sacrifice the prosperity of that business which his father had sponsored and established?

"You may think you don't care," Arthur pleaded. "You may think it doesn't matter to you what people say, but I tell you it does matter! It matters to me, Stu, if it doesn't to your mother. Don't you think I'm ambitious for you?—that

I want to see you honoured and esteemed in this town? It's *your* town, Stu, and the Evanses have always had a place in it. You can't deny, my boy, that the son of Maynard Evans, the grandson of Frederick Moldenhauer and Judge Henry Evans, owes a little something to public opinion. "You think it's funny for me to say that? Well, let me tell you, Stu, I've tried bucking public opinion. *And I know it doesn't pay!*"

"Since you mentioned my grandfather Moldenhauer," Stuart said, "did you ever stop to think how he'd feel about this business if he were alive?"

"Yes," Arthur answered. "I have. I've often wondered, too, what he would have said when the Germans raped Belgium, when they sank the *Lusitania*, when they committed any one of the thousand and one crimes that have stained the good name of the German people and made their friends—— But I won't go into that. Your grandfather, Stuart, was a good man, an honest and kind-hearted man. He left Germany and came to this country because his generation of Germans felt that life was unsatisfactory under the Hohenzollerns—or anywhere in Germany! And when he died in this town he died a good American, honoured and respected and liked *and*—worth five or six millions! That's why I say that his grandson owes something to the town!

"And I've also thought how your father, Stu, would feel about this business if he were alive."

There was a long silence.

"*He* didn't care much about public opinion," Stuart said slowly.

"I don't know about that. If he didn't, all the more reason why you should. I *do* know this—that he would never have hesitated to do his duty by his stockholders."

A year before Stuart would have turned deaf ears to that appeal. But it was six months since he had gone to work in his home city; since he had begun to feel an increased consciousness

of his family's place in it and of his relationship to his father. The recollection of how loyally his mother's and grandfather's friends, yes, and his father's friends, too, had stood by him during the time of the scandal, gave him perhaps an exaggerated feeling of individual responsibility, which quickened to his uncle's plea. "I'd like to think it over, Uncle," he said.

"Think it over carefully, Stu. And remember this: the kindest service you can render your mother is to prevent that stockholders' meeting. I'm going to give you twenty-four hours, and to-morrow I'm coming back for your answer."

At dinner with his mother that evening, Stuart cautiously reopened the question of their stand in the forthcoming meeting. "I don't see that there's anything to worry about," she answered sharply. "We'll vote our stock, and that's all there is to it. If there's any discussion I'll simply tell Henry Weatherby that it's a matter of principle with us not to take blood money in any form. I think if it comes to an exchange of views I'll be able to hold my own with that particular turnip. And if I get the chance to talk to him alone I'll certainly enjoy giving him a piece of my mind!"

"Suppose he or Kittredge should resign?"

She laughed scornfully. "They resign? I only wish they would! If I knew of a good man to take Kittredge's place he'd resign all right! As for Henry Weatherby—well, this means he *gets out.* I've made up my mind to that. But Kittredge—humph! Catch him resigning!"

Depressed by her belligerency, he did not pursue the topic further. By morning his uncle's request for a decision hung over him with Damoclean importunity. After an hour of routine duty at his office he drove out to the plant of the Buckeye.

With no very clear idea of how this excursion was to proceed or how suggest a course of action, he stopped at the president's office, thinking to quiz Kittredge as to the condition of plant and stock and in a frank talk draw out the man's own feeling about

the Buckeye's future, irrespective of munitions contracts. That office had once been his father's—it was the natural starting place for his tour. But Weatherby was engaged with a caller, and would not be free for another half hour. Stuart left the small frame office building and resolved to spend the intervening time in renewing his acquaintance with the plant.

Peters, the foreman, met him near the entrance to the main forgings shop and offered to show him about, Stuart accepting his ciceronage more for the sake of talking with him than to be shown the various machines and forges. Shops number one and four, it appeared, were shut down, the plant running only to a little over half of its capacity; and this semi-quiescent state of things was reflected in the unhurrying, occasionally lackadaisical attitude of the workmen at the clashing drop-forges. Conversation was precluded by the deafening din of the shop; now and then Peters would shout something at Stuart's ear and make a gesture which was far more intelligible than his words. "What we need is orders, and we need 'em bad," communicated Peters, roaring. "What?" shouted Stuart. With the second repetition, and a cutting down to: "We need orders:" this dazzling information succeeded in penetrating to the visitor. In the comparative quiet of the yard leading to the second shop Peters elaborated.

The present state of affairs, he said, was discouraging to the management and the men. Maybe it wasn't for him to say it, but things weren't . . . well, the place needed waking up. He spat. The sales department—he spat disdainfully and abruptly shut up. Having delivered his dictum he stubbornly resisted all Stuart's attempts to elicit specific charges against the offending department. How did he mean that it was discouraging to the men? Well—a lot of damn fool rumours flying around, he didn't suppose there was anything in 'em, but—— He switched abruptly to: "I lost a damn good man yesterday, Mr. Evans. Hunky, he was, but one of the best men I ever saw on a drop. Got into a fight with a dago in the same shop.

Steve pulled a knife, and the Eye-talian pulled his but the Eye-talian was the quickest, and before anybody could stop 'em——" He made a gesture. "Both of 'em all cut up—Steve probably done for. It's the first scrap we've had for a long time. Makes it hard, 'cause I can't get men like Steve every day. And now some of the others are all up in the air."

"What started them?" Stuart asked.

"Who—Steve and the dago? The war. It was one of these here goddamn rumours." His eyes met the young man's boldly. "There's been some talk—maybe I shouldn't repeat it, but you might as well know—that the plant is going to work on a big war order. Guns or something like that. First there was a rumour it was for the Allies, and then that it was for the Dutch. Just shows how men will believe any damn thing they hear, whether there's sense to it or not. Steve's the only hunky we got, but there's a number of dagoes and Poles and Slovaks, and they're all up in the air. And then we got Irish and Dutch and Welsh and Britishers. Hell, you'd think sometimes we weren't Americans at all, but a bunch of damn foreigners at each other's throats." He spat. "I've got to go up to the machine shop, Mr. Evans. Want to come along?"

Stuart glanced at his watch—the half hour was nearly up. "How do the men feel, as a whole, about the idea of making guns for the war?" he asked.

"Well"—Peters grinned—"depends on who it's for, you might say. Most all of 'em are for the Allies. If it's for them"— he paused and spat—"hell, you'd see 'em snap out of it all right. It'd do 'em a lot of good to be making something to help lick them Huns." He straightened. "I got a boy comin' along—guess he's a little younger'n you—and if I could just put him to work on some job like *that* . . . You see he ran away last summer to join the Canadian Army. Scared his mother to death, but we got him back." He paused, then went on musingly: "Sometimes I think maybe I should 'a' let him go. If we were in it——"

"It would be pretty tough on their mothers if we were, Peters."

"Yes—I suppose it would. But for myself, I don't think so much of this too-proud-to-fight business." He spat. "Well, I got to shove along."

Stuart spent nearly two hours with Kittredge, taking lunch with him and several of the heads of departments at the company's restaurant, and talking over such matters as regular orders, labour, wages, general business and industrial conditions, and the like. The president had called in the sales manager and gone into the question of munitions contracts rather thoroughly. There was no doubt that further large orders—more than the Buckeye could ever hope to fill with its present facilities—were to be had easily, sub-contracts from larger concerns or direct contracts with the British, French, Russian, or Italian governments. Stuart asked whether there weren't a likelihood of their competitors accepting such orders, thus releasing a large volume of regular business for the Buckeye. No, because most of their competitors had to take care of their regular contracts first; some could go after the war business at the same time; but if the Buckeye depended on the regular business voluntarily relinquished by larger plants it would be in the position of a dog begging scraps at a gourmand's table. At two-thirty Stuart left, with his mind made up. Better to face his mother's furious disappointment than to see her crucified by an angry public—and he would be rendering a genuine service to the plant his father had founded, as well as to her.

At the offices of Bonant & Co. he was informed that Mr. Arthur Evans had 'phoned during his absence and had left a message that he would be at his office after three o'clock. His mother also had 'phoned—it was nothing important, she said. He called the house but she had gone out. After glancing through his mail and leaving a message of his whereabouts, he left for his uncle's office.

Told by the stenographer that Mr. Evans was free and was expecting him, Stuart opened the glass-panelled door of the lawyer's inner office. The posture of his uncle, in the instant before he raised his head, was unusual and surprising: Arthur's head was sunk forward, supported by his hands, and his eyes were moodily staring in front of him—at nothing. There were no papers, no sign of work on the desk. A disordered newspaper lay in a heap at his feet.

Stuart hesitated for a second before he said: "I just got back a few minutes ago from the plant and found your 'phone message."

"Sit down, Stu."

The quiet voice, and that look of trouble on his uncle's face, alarmed the young man. "What's wrong, Uncle?" he asked.

Arthur roused himself. "Nothing. I've just had a sort of a bad day. You say you were down at the plant?"

"Yes. I spent most of the morning there, had lunch with Kittredge, and talked over things pretty thoroughly." He paused.

"So?" returned Arthur indifferently.

Stuart studied him for a moment. "Look here, Uncle, what's up? You seem—upset about something."

"I've seen Enid Wilkinson."

"Not bad news from Gobie?" Stuart asked quickly.

"Oh, no. But she read this morning's paper, of course, about the Lafayette Squadron—you saw it, didn't you? Downed two German planes, but young Willard listed as missing. French official. So she called me on the 'phone; wanted to know if there weren't some way I could find out more for her—fairly beside herself with worry. She'd called you, too. I went over to the *State Journal* office, just to satisfy her, though of course they didn't have anything beyond the associated press story which had already appeared with the communiqué. Then after lunch I got to thinking it over and thought I'd better run out to see her myself and cheer her up. It was a damn fool

notion, but—anyway, I went. She's just gone all to pieces over this thing."

"But why? Gobie isn't even at the front—at least—— Did you tell her about Farabee's not being allowed to fly till he'd had two more months at the school?"

"I told her everything I could think of that was reassuring, and more besides. But she's his mother, Stu. She'll worry as long as he's in uniform, whether he's at the front or a thousand miles from the front. To make matters worse, the reporters had been after her again, wanting to know about his last letter, hinting—as if she needed any hints!—that he might be at Verdun!" In his agitation he had risen nervously, and walked up and down the room. "Damn it, I don't blame her for being worried! It's all very well to minimize the danger to her, but how the devil do we know he isn't at the front? This business at Verdun——"

"He'll be in it," Stuart answered quietly. "They'll all be in it—every man France has." There was a pause. "And if the Germans break through——"

"They'll never break through! By God, boy, they're licked already! Look at this paper—look at it!" He thrust the pages forward defiantly; then with a sudden gesture straightened himself, and calmly laid the paper on the desk. "I tell you—le Mort Homme, and Thiaumont retaken, and now Vaux. It's the most wonderful defensive of history. Why, if I were a younger man——"

His voice trailed off, its echo ringing in his nephew's ears; and as he stood by the window looking out, the light fell on his shock of fine-spun silver hair, which seemed to Stuart so strange an anomaly above the ruddy face and stocky, still-military figure. A wave of sympathy suddenly overwhelmed the young man—and in its wake a trace of that old hero-worshipping affection which, when he was a little fellow, had made him speak proudly of "my uncle, who fought at Santiago." How diminutive, how like an opera-bouffe war '98 appeared

now beside this staggering death-grapple at Verdun! And here was his boyhood's hero, a little shrunken, too, with the shrinkage of his background from the new perspective; a little tragic in this attitude of unsuspected tenderness toward a woman's fears; and—what was it about the head which suddenly reminded Stuart of his father? Some hidden resemblance, or perhaps an association carried by the recollection of Santiago—one of those tricks of memory by which an image long-embedded is suddenly detached, made him for a moment acutely conscious of his father's relationship, and his, to the man at the window. It was almost as if he had glimpsed his father's face reincarnate in the uncle. . . .

"For Gobie's sake," he said softly, "and for his mother's, I hope you're right, Uncle."

Arthur's back was still turned. After a moment his voice, gruff and with a steadied carelessness, snapped: "What about the Buckeye?"

"I've decided to let you and Mr. Weatherby go ahead, Uncle."

"You mean have another directors' meeting? What'll *you* do?"

"I'll still vote against it. It simply means you and Mr. Weatherby can decide it as you wish."

Arthur came back to his desk, sat down, and looked at his nephew with something of the pained sternness of a parent who has caught his offspring in a first fib. He seemed to be inwardly revolving, first, the impossibility of the fact before him, and second, the question of what expression he should give his reaction to it. At length: "You've decided to go against your mother and let the Buckeye make munitions?"

"That's what it amounts to. I won't vote for the contract, though."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Arthur exploded. "So you're going to try to straddle the thing, are you? You're afraid to have it out with your mother, are you? Why, damn it, boy, I'd rather

see you hold out against us than try to crawl out like that! If you see the light about the plant, for God's sake take the bull by the horns and have it out!"

"But I tell you, it's a matter of principle."

Arthur fumbled angrily for a cigarette, brought one out, and lighted it. "It's going to be a matter of principle with you to take your responsibility like a man!" he thundered. "Now, look here. We're not going to have any stockholders' meeting. We're going to put the Buckeye back on its feet, and you're going to see this thing through *with me*. You're going to stick by the company, and next year, when you get your grandfather's stock, you're going to be the one big gun in that concern. You're going home to your mother to-night and tell her where you stand, and that the Buckeye's going to make guns with your consent. And *I'm* going to get Weatherby right now and stop that meeting!"

He was already at the door leading to the outer office.

"But, Uncle, *listen*——"

"Margaret, get Mr. Weatherby on the 'phone, please." He came back. "There're no ifs or buts about it, Stu. Look here." He seized his nephew's hand, and his eyes arrested and held the other's with their sudden gentleness. "Your father——" He stopped. "I feel about you, Stu, as if you were my own boy. And I'm imploring you——"

Stuart wrung his hand. "I'll do it, Uncle," he said.

As the 'phone rang he got his hat and tiptoed out of the office.

II

Nothing in his life had ever seemed harder to Stuart than facing his mother that night. At one moment he thought of the impending ordeal as a confession, at the next, an ultimatum to be sternly given and indomitably adhered to. Adhere he would, whether to confession or ultimatum; there was no turning back now, and he would take his medicine whatever came.

To say he feared her wrath would be a ridiculous understatement; he writhed at the thought of it.

He went to her room as soon as he arrived home, determined to have it over with as soon as possible. It was a little after five, and as he entered after knocking, he saw her at her dressing table, her maid engaged in combing her mistress's hair. "Not going out?" he queried.

"Dinner party at the Fishers'. I telephoned you, dear, but you weren't in. Thought I'd tell you to have someone for dinner or go out if you cared to."

"Oh." He paused doubtfully, leaning against the bed. "Can I see you before you go, Mother?"

"You certainly can. Are you afraid to look at an old woman at her dressing table?"

She smiled into her mirror at the reflected apparition of his face.

"It's something rather important. How long will you be dressing?"

He saw her eyes narrow with surprise and interrogation in the glass. "Can it wait for an hour? If I hurry I can have a little time before I go."

He replied that he would wait downstairs in the library.

Alone, he regretted the abrupt way in which he had gone to her. He was committed, now, to speak; it meant that he would send her to the dinner party in a rage, spoil her evening utterly. But at any rate the scene couldn't be protracted. He glanced through the evening paper, read the latest bulletins of German attacks and French counter-attacks on the heights overlooking the Meuse, turned to the market pages and studied the closing list of Wall Street stocks. He picked up a new novel he had started the week before: "Mr. Britling Sees It Through." Ah, nothing but the war! He threw the book aside impatiently and tried to frame the phrases he would need for the approaching interview. The hour seemed an infinite time. He roamed through the downstairs rooms of the house, and out into the garden. . . .

Then he was standing against the library fireplace, facing a stately elderly woman in dinner gown, her blonde hair magnificently coiled and coiffed, her inquiring face pinkly massaged and rouged above a rope of pearls.

"It's about the Buckeye," he began jerkily, without preliminaries. "The stockholders' meeting is off. I've decided to vote for the contract."

For a little she did not answer, but stared at him. He went on: "Everyone's in favour of it but you. I told Uncle Arthur this afternoon. I did it not so much because of the plant—though I feel this is the only way to help the plant—as because I want to spare you a lot of trouble, Mother. You don't realize how unpleasant it would be for you if Weatherby and the others——"

She broke in furiously: "So that's it! Weatherby and Arthur have been after you, have they? You want to *spare* me—*what*, I'd like to know? Are you afraid to stand by me? Are you *afraid* of what they say? *Oh!*" The disgust and bitterness of her exclamation choked her.

He endeavoured to reason with her, to explain that the decision could have no possible effect on the war, that her mad intransigency could harm only herself and the Buckeye. He was wasting his breath, and knew it. She was beyond reason, beyond self-control. She called him a coward and a traitor. She lost the power of speech—he thought for an instant that she was about to strike him. But he stood his ground, stood with his back against the fireplace, though he was trembling all over.

With a great effort she mastered herself. "I'm going out of this house," she said slowly. Her eyes never left his face. "I can't speak—I don't trust myself with you. You are simply insane. I'll—I'll talk to you when I come back."

And she walked out of the room slowly, like an invalid trying her limbs after a desperate illness, shaking a little. . . .

He fell into a chair.

III

It lacked a few minutes of ten when Augusta's limousine rolled up the long winding driveway and came to a stop in the Tudor courtyard. She noted, in the instant before the footman opened the door, that the mullioned windows of the library, opening on the court, were dark. "He must be in his room," she thought. She was quite composed now, and tranquilly conscious of her strength and will flowing in her like a steady deep current. Her mind worked coldly and methodically, as if some obstruction had been swept clean from all its channels. She had calculated the time to a nicety; she had never ceased to calculate from the moment when, surrounded by gay and chattering people at the table, her poise and confidence had miraculously returned. There had been that long aimless ride during which she had mustered her forces, before she had stopped at the Fishers'. She hadn't minded being late; she reflected that she had been blessed with an advantage in being thrown on her mettle among people, while Stuart was alone at home. Give him three hours alone with the memory of that terrible scene . . . he would not be able to dismiss it as she could: she would return fresh as some Antæus restored by contact with his element, with every detail of her plan of battle mapped out. She smiled grimly as she recalled telling her hostess of her sick-headache. . . . She had never felt better in her life than at this moment, or readier to impose her will.

She entered the long dimly lighted, gleaming hall wearing that same grim smile, as the butler hurried forward.

"Mr. Evans in his room?" she inquired negligently.

"I—I don't know, ma'am. He was at the downstairs telephone a few minutes ago."

She peered into the lighted drawing room on her way to the stairs. It was empty, but her eye was suddenly attracted by a letter she had left on the farther sofa. Careless of Gruener not to pick it up! She walked rapidly across the room. . . .

Was that Stuart sitting in a chair in the darkened library beyond?

Ah, he was in even worse shape than she had anticipated! That stricken attitude, with his head buried in his hands. . . .

He did not look up until she stood over him.

"Well, Stuart," she said briskly. And then she noticed his eyes.

"Gobie's been killed." . . .

She stood very still, watching him; then, after a long moment, quietly slipped into the drawing room and found a chair whence she would not be able to see that figure in the other room.

She wanted to think—and now that obstruction had come back in her mind, had clogged it so that she could not think. Presently she heard her son's step, and knew he was behind her. She turned her head.

"We must go right away," he said, in a strangely muffled voice. "Helen called me just before you came in."

"Go—where?" she asked stupidly.

"To Mrs. Wilkinson's, of course. I'll get the car——"

"Killed—in action?"

"At Verdun."

He waited a moment, but she could find nothing to say. Then he left the room.

She heard him in the hall, giving instructions to Gruener. She must think. . . . Killed at Verdun. He would go into the French Army, would he, and try to kill Germans! . . . No, no: *she must think.* That obstruction, like a dull weight in her brain . . .

It was one of the great moments of her life, and she sensed it to be crucial, terribly crucial and fateful and overwhelming. And she felt powerless. Her impotence crushed her, closed down upon her like falling ruins. . . .

He was back. "Come, Mother," he said.

"I can't see her, Stuart. You go alone."

Was it really her voice which had said that?

He was gone.

CHAPTER XV

REVELATIONS

I

STUART, as he shut off the motor, sat still for a moment and with the slanting afternoon sunlight in his eyes regarded the familiar brick Colonial house of the Thurlows. He contemplated it as a child contemplates the face of a long-absent adult friend, with intent wonder and a gradually widening recognition. Then he threw back his shoulders, and with head raised, proceeded up the walk toward the front door.

Helen Thurlow opened the door as he approached. He saw her standing there quietly on the threshold, dressed simply in a dark suit, as one sees familiar apparitions in dreams; her face seemed curiously immobile, with one expression only, as in a dream. He had again that sensation of unreality which had oppressed him so often during the past week. . . .

"I'm glad you came."

The words came to him like sounds alternately clear and swallowed up in fog; and he saw her distinctly across the living room, and was conscious for the first time of being seated in a softly cushioned chair.

"Have you seen her to-day?" he asked.

"I ran in for a while this morning, and she wanted me to come for dinner to-night with you. . . . Stu, I can't do anything, though. She's still determined to go to France. When I was leaving this morning she said: 'I suppose they won't want an old woman like me, but there must be some kind of work.' I argued with her, but it did no good."

"We'll just have to keep at it, Helen—we've got to dissuade her. Even if she were allowed to go Charles wouldn't be, and she couldn't go alone. Did you talk to her about Harbor Point?"

"Yes. Charles can't leave at this time for more than a week, and she doesn't want to, anyway. You know, Stu, this morning she almost made me feel that perhaps it would be the best thing for her to go over there."

"And try to get to the front to see the grave? My dear . . ."

The words slipped out so naturally that neither seemed conscious of them.

"You forget that it's war, and that a great battle's going on." He paused and lighted a cigarette. It was a great relief to be able to talk so easily, so entirely as if nothing had ever happened between them. "No. I've thought about it all day, Helen. You're doubtless right about her doing some kind of war work, but we must find it for her in this country. And I've been wondering: couldn't you go up to Michigan with her for a while? Charles could take his week, and you could stay until he came back later. I might get up for a little while, before I go to Plattsburg. And meanwhile she could find something—some kind of Red Cross work . . ."

So they talked on, each very earnest, each with the feeling of sharing a common sorrow which seemed to be assuaged, and a common hope which seemed to increase, with the sharing.

II

During those days Stuart was scarcely conscious of grief, except as a component of the vari-coloured prism of his immense compassion for Mrs. Wilkinson and Helen. His feeling about Gobie manifested itself in an extreme and heightened consciousness of Gobie, which seemed to transmute his mind into a delicate and finely tempered emotional instrument, a lute touched by invisible ghostly fingers and vibrating in a harmony of which the thought of Gobie seemed the resolving tonal chord.

Gobie was a presence invoked by the slightest breath, the most incongruous sound, by colours, scents, music, and the meaningless impertinent talk of all the moving shapes peopling his world. The thought of Gobie having ceased to be beat dully and repeatedly in Stuart's brain, leaving a strange ache and an even stranger impressionability to irrelevant images of Gobie as he had known him in forgotten attitudes and against forgotten backgrounds; but the poignant pathos of such unbidden visitations left him in a dry-eyed sort of stupor, dead to joy or realizable pain.

Then, one day, he received Gobie's last letter, written at the front two weeks before his death.

So you want me to write my mother that I'm stuck for keeps as a rotten embusqué in the rear? You're right, old fellow, I shouldn't have told her. But can't you just see me that day I was accepted for the Escadrille Lafayette? Hallelujahs all over Paris, and a Glory Be to God affection toward the French people and the farthest nooks and recesses of the cosmos, including Columbus. That isn't particularly extenuating, of course—but, damn it, she had to know sooner or later, didn't she? Right again, Wilkinson, thou Dædalus with the pitiless logician's mind.

So to your plaintive miserere over my deplorable and damnable failure—it's been all of that—to write you often. *Eh bien, la belle paresse.* . . . But what could I have written you? The most godawful drivel, or else—the omnipresent It, of course, the War, the French War, the French Army, the French nation. To air my childish enthusiasms—*ah non, pas ça!* To reveal my hidden ground of thought and of austerity within—oh, bunk. Read some of the nice Over the Top books and leave me lay—for if you don't I'll bore you to death and drink and tears—of which three choices I know my Paris, with his sunny disposition and immortal soul will take—a greencup, Henry, thou wing-footed Hermes with the stolid Teutonic smile——

. . . I can't write about all this. Why pretend that I'm just bubbling over with nice neat little photographic impressions which must be recorded for the edification of my family and friends, and published later in the *Dispatch* or *State Journal* with a caption about another interesting letter from a local boy in France? It's a bad job writing you or Helen or Mother—worst of all, Mother. "No spring

nor summer beauty hath such grace——" Keep on bucking her up, Stu. I won't try to thank you, for I'd only make a mess of it.

. . . Oh, the prettiest, trimmest ship you ever saw! Fast as thought, and with the wickedest roar—but I'd better be careful or I'll get censored. And when you take her into a dive and start that ugly little devil of a Hotchkiss with its staccato Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat—you feel, well, like a drunken falcon or a thunderbolt loosed by some primitive Michael Angelo Jehovah—so damned dynamic and elemental and eternal. . . . And we've got a marvellous crowd. At mess the other night we had Farnam and a couple of others from the First Group—an Ancient to Anxious—Novice Idolaters! Legion of Honour and a crippled back. Fair Harvard, my profoundest salaams for helping to produce George Irving Wilton Farnam! And some night soon he's coming back, to bring—*le bon espoir!*—Guynemer himself, if the gods are kind.

. . . But to see these dirty unkempt infantry fellows, these *fantassins*, with their dead-weary faces—a bearded, sweaty Christ flanked by a farmer's lad and a gutter apache, and the face of your last café waiter, and a blood-smeared kid with a girl's soft eyes, in an endless column of steel and muddy horizon blue.

> Hear ye not the hum
> Of mighty workings?
> Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb.

(Fie, fie, John Keats, I'll bet the censor gets you.)

. . . But Paris is not for me—not till my first leave, anyway. Leave?—what is the boy thinking of? Well, just at present of my nice bunk, and endless dreams of ships and clouds and maybe of some happy elysium on a warless H. G. Wells planet, where you and I can smoke and read and bull and argue before a crackling wood fire . . . .

III

And Augusta?

For a week she and her son had studiously and conscientiously avoided each other. He kept away from the house most of the time, and when he did encounter her said little or nothing. He was courteous, coolly polite, not so much distant toward her as sublimely unaware of any claim she might have upon his interest or consideration; while she went

about in one of her black humours, proudly defiant and seeming invulnerable to emotional warmth or cold. Her capitulation came with startling suddenness—and to her terror and despair, it failed to move him in the least.

She returned home late one afternoon and sought him out in his upstairs sitting room. He was at his desk, and as he saw her standing expectantly by the door, laid aside his letter and turned in his chair. "I've been to see Enid Wilkinson," she said.

"Oh." It was not exclamatory but a gentle exhalation of breath. "Thank you, Mother."

She waited a moment before pursuing: "I told her I was sorry —for everything in the past."

"What did she say?"

"She told me to forget any unpleasant things, and remember only the—the good things."

"That's like her," he said quietly, with a strange glow of pride in his voice which hurt her as she realized its import. But she still lingered.

"She said one thing that struck me as rather odd, Stuart. She said her son's death had been expiatory, that it atoned for everything in the past, and that the thought of that atonement made her resigned. Wasn't it strange for her to say that?"

He replied patiently, as if to a child: "No, I think not."

"But what could it atone for?"

His face clouded slightly, but his eyes still wore that too-patient look. "She's a deeply religious woman, Mother. She thinks in terms of Christian theology. It is natural that at a time like this—I can't explain very well, but her grief seeks outlet in a form of mysticism, I think. And she has a great deal of cause to feel that you . . . well, she had much to forgive."

She looked her bewilderment. "You probably can't understand," he added musingly.

"Oh, but I do understand! I do, perfectly." She made an

impulsive movement toward him. "Stuart, dear, you—you haven't been——"

"Yes?"

"Very nice to me lately, have you?"

"I'm sorry if I gave you that impression, Mother." There was an oppressive pause. He knew he was being cruel, but he could not bring himself to simulate a tenderness the very thought of which repelled him. He desired above all things that she leave him. "One thing I've been meaning to tell you," he resumed. "I'm going to the Plattsburg training camp this summer with Uncle Arthur."

"You're going into the army?"

She said the words slowly, as if each hurt her like acid on a wound.

"I'd like to think it was the army. Uncle Arthur calls it a glorified boy scouts' outing for the sake of showing our politicians that we aren't all peace-at-any-pricers." He smiled bitterly. "You don't need to worry; it's only for six weeks, and I probably won't suffer anything worse than a coat of tan."

"Oh! Then you won't get to Hyannis till September. You've worked so hard—I'd hoped——"

"I won't get to Hyannis at all, Mother. Awfully sorry, but I don't feel that I can possibly take more than six weeks during my first year."

She stood for a long moment, quite motionless, her eyes surprised, reproachful, hurt; then without a word she walked out of the room.

Grimly he returned to his letter, and for a little tried to write. The effort was a failure; he knew he had treated her abominably, and though he kept telling himself that he had behaved with a sternness not only justified but necessary, he was at heart thoroughly ashamed. If she had only flared up with some of her old angry spirit: Her meekness had disarmed him, and her unspoken reproach undermined his accumulated ran-

cours and brought them tottering down in an ugly heap affronting the sight. Of course, she had been counting on the summer—and he had been so needlessly callous and unkind.

He found her lying across her bed, a big heavy woman with disordered hair and red wet eyes. There was more gray in the hair than he had ever noticed before. She was a great bulking heap of flesh and clothes, a heavy bundle that someone had violently thrown there, rumpling the filigree lace coverlet. There was something terrible in her surrender; it was a loss of dignity which left her morally impoverished and in utter spiritual destitution. For the space of a few minutes he was to see her as none ever had before, robbed of her all, her strength and pride and courage—and the sight was more than he could bear.

He leaned over, and gently turning her head with his hand, kissed her cheek. She buried her head again, and her big body shook convulsively. He kissed her again, though he had to close his eyes. And then she had her arms around his neck, sobbing, wetting his face with her face. He broke away.

"Oh, Stuart, you're all I've got: Tell me you love me—I don't care what you do if you love me: But I can't bear to have you go to war; if you were killed I couldn't bear it, Stuart. Arthur sha'n't have you! You're my son." She grew calmer as he caressed her with his arm. And he kissed her again, this time very tenderly.

"There's nothing to worry about, dear," he whispered. "There's no war. I'm not going to war just because I'm going to Plattsburg."

"Yes, but they'll keep at it till they get this country in! I know it, I've felt it all along. If you go with Arthur you'll go to war. All the world's against us, and now they're trying to get America in. They're trying to crush Germany, Stuart, because they hate her! *They call us Huns.*" She got up abruptly her face flashing with the old determination. "But they sha'n't do it! They can't beat Germany, they'll never

beat her! And you're not going to Plattsburg." She went to her dressing table and sat down. "Leave me now, Stuart."

"My mind is quite made up, Mother."

He did not look back as he left the room.

IV

Toward the end of June, Mrs. Wilkinson very sensibly went to Michigan, taking a cottage with her son Charles at Harbor Point. Charles's fiancée, a rather plain but admirably wholesome girl slightly older than Helen Thurlow, visited them for two weeks in July, and Helen went up with her. The young people, with Stuart as a willing accomplice, had planned to take turn about during the summer in staying with the bereaved mother, who on her side professed a desire to have as many of them as possible with her at all times. There was never an atmosphere of oppressive grief at the Harbor Point Cottage; if Enid sorrowed it was in the privacy of her own room, in lonely vigils with herself; and in the company of her "adopted" youngsters she was cheerful and busy and forgetful of self. She took up golf and spent much of her time on the links or on long walks about the sandy strip of pine-covered woodland bordering the lake; at intervals she knitted and made bandages for the local Red Cross. Charles had to return at the end of the second week; meanwhile, his mother had asked Stuart to come before the other's departure and stay as long as he could. A threatened state of siege approaching a house party was averted by the latter's asking permission to come at a later date, when Charles and the others would be gone and Mrs. Wilkinson alone. In this Stuart was prompted not merely by a desire to make his visit a bridge-gap between Charles's departure and later return, but by a dread of offending his mother and of seeing as much of Helen Thurlow as would be inevitable under the circumstances. His mother was leaving Columbus in the middle of July, planning to spend a month at Hyannis and later stay at a Lake Champlain hotel during the last part

of Stuart's time in camp; he therefore resolved to visit Harbor Point after her departure, and go on from there to Plattsburg. By the last week of July—which he thus reserved for Mrs. Wilkinson—Helen would have left Harbor Point.

The relations between them were exactly where they had stood a month before—they were very old friends who would always be best friends, with a common interest in Gobie's mother and a common desire to protect and comfort her. The possibility of their ever becoming more, Stuart never permitted himself to entertain. To be thrown with Helen constantly for a week, to be with her night and day under the same roof, could not fail to evoke old memories and kindle old desires which had much better be left in their none-too-secure or dusty pigeonholes. The interests of his own peace of mind and hers, indeed common decency and regard, dictated that each give the other a comfortable exclusion.

Alas for the best intentions and the best-laid plans! The morning he arrived at Harbor Point he found that Helen had come down with tonsillitis the day before, due to sublime neglect of a cold caught from cold-weather swimming and much exposure. Her reservations were cancelled, she was in bed at the cottage, Enid was worried, and a young doctor was much in evidence. Stuart very nearly turned back. Needless to say his better nature triumphed, and Enid's remonstrances allayed his ephemeral panic. Leave Mrs. Wilkinson in the lurch at such a time, when Helen had a temperature of 103? The child might have diphtheria. . . . He had come at the right time to be of service, after all! But nothing would persuade him to stay at the cottage; the thought of burdening "Auntie" Enid's already overworked and complaining coloured Minnie and throwing a disorganized household into further confusion was intolerable. It was only a step to the club. . . . Well, yes, he might come over for a meal now and then. . . .

He saw Helen for a few minutes the next day, when her

fever had greatly abated, and he expressed concern at her pallor, and got a dry, wry-faced laugh that went off into a squeak for his pains. "Get me my vanity . . . on the dresser!" she gulped. "Ouch! This—damn throat!" She already had the hand mirror from the bed table. "Don't talk!" he begged, handing her the small gold box. She laughed; squeaked: "Not that one! The other—there." She had on a sky-blue bedjacket of some fluffy stuff, with a bit of lace at her throat, and her arms were bare below the rounded, sunburned elbows. "I know I'm a mess—but honestly, I did—work like the devil—on this hair."—"Don't talk, dear, *please*"; and suddenly realizing what he had said and that they were alone, he fled in shame and panic.

He didn't go near her the following day, but sent flowers, with a brief note expressing his relief at her improvement and his hope that she would be quite speedily all right. He played golf with Mrs. Wilkinson, insisted on her taking lunch with him at the club, and when she pleaded the necessity of getting back to her invalid, declined to accompany her on the grounds of having much to do. But surely he'd come for dinner? Sorry, but a prior engagement—some men at the club: but he'd stop by in the evening to hear how Helen was getting along.

He left his room and his novel at eight o'clock, after a joyless solitary dinner, and sauntered over to the cottage. And in the living room he found Mrs. Wilkinson, the young doctor, a great roaring wood fire, and candle-light, Helen sitting up for the first time in kimono and many shawls, and two other utterly vapid and idiotic young men who had no more consideration for a girl whose temperature had been 103 only forty-eight hours before than to play a ukulele and the vilest jazz records they could find. . . . Their gaiety was indecent, it was an affront, an outrage. And that young fool of a doctor, who sat over there in the darkened corner beside Helen, laughing at everything that was said and looking at her with those mooncalf eyes . . .

He left after twenty minutes, and at the club told himself that he had done his duty; that Helen was out of danger and Enid's morale splendidly improved; and that it would be well to arrive at Plattsburg a day or two before things started. Yes, he could get a lower for to-morrow night.

And the next morning he broke the news to Mrs. Wilkinson, who took it as he had expected, with a protest and just the proper shade of regret and insistence, and suggested that they go for a long rambling walk together on the road leading through the pines.

It was at a lonely place on the beach, on the very tip of the point, that she talked to him for the first and only time about his father.

She had never dared speak to him before, she said, though at times she had wanted to so much. . . . Gobie had told her once that Stuart couldn't forgive his father, and she had wanted to write, but . . . Augusta had only jeered that one time she had broached the subject to her. But now Stuart was a man, and he had grown so close to her . . . almost like her own son. She brought the tears to his eyes, and he caught and held her hand. Then, with a great effort, she went on.

His father had never been understood, never appreciated fully even by those who knew him best; and in his death . . . Well, he had been the victim of damning circumstances and the readiness of people to believe the worst. They had smirched his name; it was a terrible injustice. . . . She was silent for a time, and then continued: "I knew your father as a boy, and I saw a side of him, later. . . . He was so fine, Stuart, so chivalrous and kind—always. . . . I've never believed for a minute what they said about him. I *know* he didn't love that woman, Stuart. I couldn't tell people why. . . . I don't mean there was ever anything between us—there wasn't—we were simply good friends. But I *know*—he helped her, that was all—it was like him to do that, and she had a

child . . . he loved children, you know. I remember how kind he was to my boy. . . ."

She turned her head away and furtively wiped her eyes. After a little he got up and walked slowly for some distance down the beach. He had to be alone; he felt the necessity of regaining his reason, not that he was ashamed of his tears, but because it seemed that the universe about him was tottering in wild delirious pandemonium and—and ecstasy! No, he didn't believe, he couldn't believe that revelation . . . but to hear it said again that his father was chivalrous and kind . . . to think again of his father with Gobie a little boy . . . to think of Enid Wilkinson believing with the pathetic blind faith of a good woman, closing her eyes to deliberate certainty through all these years. . . .

His heart felt as if cool soothing fingers had held it and caressed it, and allayed its fears. He wanted to shout to the pines and the far gleaming surface of the lake that his father was good, and kind! And when he returned to Enid Wilkinson he raised her with his hand, and kissed her. . . .

Afterward, during the walk back, she said: "My dear, there's one more thing I wanted to talk to you about."

"What's that, Auntie Enid?"

"I don't know whether to let you go to-night or not. Of course you know we want you to stay—we're going to miss you terribly—even though we haven't seen much of you," she added, with a faint smile.

He expressed the keenest regret that the Plattsburg camp was opening so soon, but really he had to go.

"Perhaps it's just as well," she answered. "It's a little early just yet to—to take full advantage of a summer resort. Only—don't be a goose later on, Stuart."

"What do you mean, Auntie Enid?"

"You know very well what I mean. You're going to marry Helen, and there's not a single reason in the world why you shouldn't."

He was honestly shocked. "Why, I never—it's out of the question, I assure you. I hope—you surely didn't think I came up here just—just to——"

"Of course you didn't, you big goose! Didn't I have to swear that Helen was leaving before you'd come?" She laughed gaily, but immediately softened. "Don't think I fail to appreciate how things stand," she continued. "I respect your scruples, Stuart. And she isn't ready yet. We wouldn't want it to be otherwise, would we? But there's so much unhappiness in the world, Stuart, so much sorrow . . . we mustn't ever turn our backs on what happiness is rightfully ours. Gobie doesn't want us to grieve—he's somewhere, you know . . . quite close sometimes . . . and you know what he would wish for you and Helen."

Her face was beautiful with the radiant serenity of perfect faith, and her voice was calm, a little faltering but not tremulous, as if she were speaking of a living presence whom she loved.

He took dinner with Enid and Helen at the cottage, and had a half hour afterward before his train. It was a pleasant time, with scarcely a shadow to cloud their cheerful talk or mar their enjoyment of one of coloured Minnie's supreme culinary triumphs—a chicken dinner that might have come out of the mythical ante-bellum South. The half hour was as fugitive as Minnie's sweet potatoes, and it seemed to vanish as lightly and quickly as the steam from Minnie's hot platters of chicken. Enid was cheerful as a girl . . . Helen was a girl, a radiant young woman whose face seemed just a trifle paler and thinner, a shade more thoughtful and reserved, with a look of wistful sadness now and then, when none was observing. And her blue eyes, Stuart thought, were deeper, as if they had looked on life and mirrored some of its shadows in their tranquil depths.

Then it was time to say good-bye, and Auntie Enid was

gone to get her wraps for the short walk to the club and station.

"I'm sorry you're leaving so soon, Stu, and that I had to get sick. But then, if it hadn't been for tonsillitis I wouldn't have seen you."

"You must take better care of yourself, Helen, and not let any more colds catch you," he returned gravely.

"Wasn't it stupid? . . . Stu, I think it's splendid you're going to Plattsburg."

"Oh! . . . it's little enough."

A pause.

"Will you let me write you, Helen? You know I'll—be anxious to hear how you're getting along."

She laughed her old laugh, for the first time. "And what are your letters going to tell you about how I'm getting along?"

"I'll enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard for you to make your mark on."

And as Enid Wilkinson appeared they smilingly shook hands.

CHAPTER XVI

REVEILLE

A COOL spring dawn, with a sky like a great veil of fine-drawn gossamer silk, a dewy freshness in the air and a glistening sheen over the grassy pastures, and a mist over the flat woodlands of central Indiana, on the outskirts of Fort Benjamin Harrison.

A hundred lazy columns of gray-brown smoke curled up from kitchen fires, and as the radiance brightened in the east the rows of long low wooden barracks stood out ugly and new and raw with the rawness of unpainted, freshly nailed-together timber. On the newly strung telephone wires along the muddy dirt road a few sparrows incessantly chirped, and robins dug busily between the pools and puddles of water along the oozy company streets.

It was a quarter to five on a Monday morning in May, 1917. A red-faced bugler walked rapidly and gingerly down the muddy road, and arriving at a cindered place opposite the barracks of the First Company of the Third Battalion, put his bugle to his lips and blew the First Call. Having expended a tremendous amount of breath in holding the last note, he removed the bugle with a smart flourish, drew the crisp air into his lungs, and yawned. The sound of a motor caused him to turn—and almost immediately he ceased to yawn.

A hundred yards away, advancing toward him in the mud, came a large and resplendent roadster, skidding badly as it came to a stop opposite the First Company's barracks. A very tall young man in olive-drab with a candidate's cord on his campaign hat disentangled himself from the steering wheel beside a

very pretty girl, who straightway took his place at the wheel, and as the young man hung on the running board, reached up with her arms around his neck and kissed him, very impressively and continuously, on the mouth.

Bugler Tony Cervone, never having mingled in those circles where one is taught to avert his eyes at the spectacle of carnal impulses, having indeed spent two rather sexual years in the Regular Army, grinned a broad and Rabelaisian grin and continued to stare.

"*Now do hurry, darling!*" The words floated to Bugler Cervone very distinctly, but any subsequent sounds were lost in a second and less protracted embrace. Then the tall candidate officer displayed astounding agility in leaping a ditch and several puddles of water, passing within a few yards of Bugler Cervone—whose interest in him was so perfunctory, whose eyes were so firmly riveted on the ravishing driver of the car, that he failed to jump in time and got his newly washed canvas leggings splashed with mud as the heavy roadster shot past.

Bugler Cervone followed it down the road with his eyes, left it to glance toward the barracks, where the late passenger was dropping a pass in the small wooden box outside the company headquarters, muttered a softly reflective "Christ!" and yawned voluptuously. Then he bethought himself of his leggings and said something more expressive.

Crossing to the opposite kitchen shack, Bugler Cervone opened diplomatic pourparlers with one Sheehan, Private and temporary K. P.

"Hey, Spike! Got a tailormade?"

"Get the hell out of here, you wop with a tin horn!"

This being pronounced with merely friendly emphasis, Bugler Cervone was not discouraged. "Say, did you see that swell jane kiss that damned rooky shavetail?" he queried, the while extracting casually a package of cigarettes from the other's shirt pocket.

K. P. Sheehan, busy peeling spuds, looked at the bugler with

wide-mouthed alarm. "Say! You been hittin' the hop? This ain't Saturday night, you know."

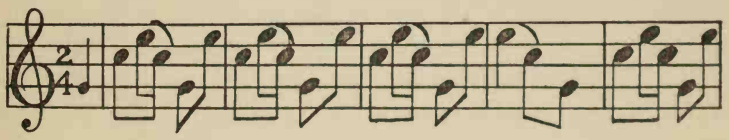
Bugler Cervone described his vision graphically and with considerable art, as a tribute to which, it may be said that even Cook Olaf Johnson, ordinarily holding himself above such ribald mouthings while in the discharge of his duties, was impressed.

"Did the feller go into de Furst Company?" he asked; and on hearing the affirmative, contributed: "Vell, dey bane jhoost married."

"How the hell do you know, Cook?"

"I guess I cook dose chickens for de whole damn company las' week, didn't I? Dey bane got married Saturday night las' week in town. Feller, he rich as hell, dey say. Gave a big feed for de whole damn company Friday night. Say, you, hurry up with them spuds!"

"Well, what the hell do you know about that?" exclaimed Bugler Cervone. "Say, and those guys think they're in the Army."

"Aw, chase yourself out of here and pipe the dopes out," muttered Sheehan.

Bugler Cervone stood again on the cindered place in the road and glanced at his watch. A ragged line was forming a few hundred feet away, other lines down the long vista of the battalion parade ground. And waiting a moment, sympathetic in spite of himself with the last stragglers pouring out of the wooden barracks, he raised his bugle and with all the pride and absorption of a virtuoso blew that call which seemed to echo over all the broad awakening land. . . .